



ASIA SEMINAR

ON MISSION

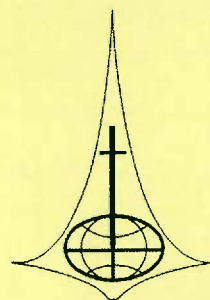


KOTA KINABALU,
SABAH, MALAYSIA
OCTOBER 25-30, 2000



REPORT

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION
Department for Mission and Development



The opinions expressed in this publication reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Lutheran World Federation.

Published by:
The Lutheran World Federation
Department for Mission and Development
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CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

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FOREWORD

Since 1978, there have been several consultations and seminars on mission. The All Asia Lutheran Seminar on Mission, held in Hong Kong, 1978, encouraged member churches to study the regional thinking on mission and the missiological challenges. The consultation on Global Partnership in Mission, which took place in Manila, the Philippines, 1979, encouraged member churches to increase the awareness of mission responsibility, including patterns of practical cooperation for mission between Asian churches and overseas partners. The Asian Mission Consultation, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1991, put emphasis on rethinking a model of Asian Christianity true to the Asian culture. The LWF Mekong Region Mission Partners' Consultation held in Bangkok, September 29-October 5, 2000, encouraged member churches to reflect on how to improve coordination and common plans for mission activities.

The LWF Asia Regional Seminar on Mission held in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, October 25-30, 2000, was a response to the recommendation of the Asia Regional Coordinating Committee (ARCC) meeting, held in Bangkok in 1998. The meeting of the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Asia (ACTEAS), held in Bangkok in 1996 and 1998 became aware that Asia is a region where mission is priority. Therefore, the committee recommended that churches provide short-term missionary training for clergy and laity, enabling them to identify and take up the mission challenges of the churches today.

The Seminar was also a follow up to the LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission, held in Nairobi, 1998, which recommended that more missiological studies be conducted by member churches, taking into account the understanding of mission as including proclamation, nurturing of the baptized, service, advocacy for justice and peace, dialogue with people of diverse faiths and care of creation. At the meeting of the LWF Council in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 1999, the Program Committee for Mission and Development approved the following programs for Asia: Seminar on Mission for the year 2000, Missionary Training Program for the year 2001-2002 and Mission Practices for the year 2001-2002.

It is with great pleasure that we now present to you the report of the Seminar. The Seminar concluded successfully with a statement, which is included in this report, together with the papers which served as discussion starters, group reports, presentations, program and the list of the participants.

Under the theme, "Mission in the Asian Context for the Third Millennium", the participants dealt with the following topics in seven different groups:

1. Mission and Scriptures
2. Mission and the Church
3. Mission and Context
4. Mission and Communication
5. Mission and Globalization
6. Mission and Healing Ministry

7. Mission and People of Diverse Faiths

The above topics, the keynote address and the four main presentations: 'Mission and Communion', 'Missio Dei in the Asian Context', 'Mission and Church Renewal' and 'Exploring Curriculum Formation' facilitated broad discussion of the two main aims of the seminar:

1. To develop a clear plan of action for mission
2. To develop a program plan and curriculum for the missionary training program that will be implemented in October, 2001 (at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Chennai, India) and in October 2002 (at Sabah Theological Seminary, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia).

We were very grateful that sixty four representatives of Asian Lutheran churches participated in the seminar. We hope that they will be able to make good use of the learning and experience gained during the seminar. We also hope that the contents of this report will prove helpful as together we continue to promote a participatory engagement in the process of rethinking and formulating an action plan for mission in Asia in this new millennium.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) and the Sabah Theological Seminary (STS) for hosting and providing facilities for the seminar. We express our deep appreciation to Dr. Péri Rasolondraibe, DMD Director, for his knowledgeable contributions and insight, and to all the resource persons for their inspiring presentations which contributed towards the success of the seminar. Finally, we want to express our heartfelt thanks to Ms. Agneta Ucko, LWF Deputy General Secretary, who inspired the participants at the opening ceremony to have serious discussions that would serve the mission activities of the whole church.

Ginda P. Harahap
Area Secretary for Asia/Middle East

Mission in the Asian Context for the Third Millennium

Greeting

Ms Agneta Ucko
LWF Deputy General Secretary

It is a great pleasure for me to bring you greetings on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation, from the General Secretary and the member churches worldwide. It is with great joy and gratefulness that I bring you these greetings, happy to today be among representatives from our Asian member churches, ecumenical guests and other officials from Kota Kinabalu. On behalf of the LWF, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the leadership of the Basel Christian Church in Malaysia and the Sabah Theological Seminar for hosting this conference. We appreciate profoundly all the arrangements that you have made, which makes all of us feel very welcomed here in Malaysia.

Similar to what you have to consider here in Malaysia, all member churches are carrying out their ministry in very specific situations. All face joys and sorrows. At this time I would like to specifically mention our member church in the Middle East, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan (ELCJ). I am sure you have all followed the latest news and fully appreciate and understand under what difficult circumstances the church there is currently living. Let me echo the recent message from the general secretary, where he asks all member churches to support and stand by the ELCJ in prayers, thoughts and through other means of solidarity.

Other churches face other challenges. During the recent Week of Meetings in Geneva, staff was able to listen to voices from the churches and our field programs. We specifically lifted up the situation in Mozambique and how our field program and the member church there have to face very severe flooding and all the need for humanitarian assistance that comes with such a disaster. We also focused our discussions on the situation in Cambodia, which in geographical terms is closer to you. The plight of landmines that so many people are suffering from is the Cambodian reality after conflict and war. It is now the task to help the people to de-mine the land so they can be able to use it again for their living. In these disaster and emergency areas, we unfortunately also see an increase of refugees and also of Human Rights violations.

Disasters put the member church at risk in a global way and it points clearly to the effects of globalization. I don't need to mention these effects here, we all see them. LWF is determined to address the issue of globalization on behalf of the member churches on a global level that hopefully will be helpful also on the local level.

In the life of the LWF, we are now preparing for the Tenth Assembly, the time when all member churches come together. We remember vividly remember the Asian flavor and the concerns from this context that were lifted up three years ago in Honk Kong. The LWF

Council has just decided that the Tenth Assembly will be held in 2003 in Winnipeg, Canada. You have just received a letter from the general secretary, where he asks you to engage in the common task of choosing a theme for the Tenth Assembly.

The world today is very complex and a theme for the first assembly in the third millennium needs to take this into account. A theme of today has to be ecumenical. We have several years of experience in working towards Christian unity and it is no longer an option but more a condition that we do our ministry ecumenically. The Council has recently asked the secretariat to explore how the Christian World Communions could come closer together and work together for a more coherent message in the world.

An assembly is important in the sense that it is the time when all member churches come together. This meeting is as important, because when a small selected group representing our constituency meets to focus on a specific issue or task, you are doing this for the sake of each other and for the benefit of us all. The theme of this consultation "Mission in the Asian context for the Third Millennium" sets the agenda for our deliberations at this time. I am personally happy that the issue is discussed considering the Asian context. When discussing mission today, the Asian context is of a very special significance and challenge to us. Asia, being the cradle for so many religions, makes it impossible to say anything about mission without the consideration of people of other faiths. The task that you are embarking on as Asian churches in this consultation, can therefore hopefully also teach all of us something, whether we come from Europe, Africa or Latin America.

During my time with the LWF I have heard many references to the Sabah Theological Seminar (STS) as a venue for many theological reflections, especially in providing space for indigenous people of Malaysia. I am therefore happy that the STS again will be the laboratory when we struggle with the theological understanding of mission in Asia.

I would like to conclude my greeting by quoting St Paul in his letter to the Philippians, reminding us that whatever we do it is God that is at work in us, enabling us both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Thank you,

GREETING

It is always exciting to have a seminar on mission in Asia. It is exciting because Asia is a region where mission is priority. Asia is the least evangelized continent in the world. It is estimated that Christians number only about 3% of the population in Asia. It is exciting, too, because even though several consultations and conferences on the question of mission have already taken place in Asia since 1978, this is the first mission seminar involving LWF member churches in Asia to take place in the new millennium.

The Asian Church Leadership Conference, held in Chennai last year, recommended that “Churches coordinate and network their mission activities and programs within the Asian region and develop mission awareness among member churches”. This seminar is one of the responses to this recommendation in terms of developing a new understanding of mission, a clear plan of action for mission and also developing and helping prepare curriculum for the Mission Training Program in Asia.

I find it even more exciting because we are here on the mountain, at Sabah Theological Seminary, to respond to God’s call to do His own mission in Asia. It reminds us of the Prophet Isaya when he said, “How beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘your God reigns’ “.

It is, therefore, a great honor and privilege to welcome and greet you all on behalf of the Asia Desk, Geneva. I should like to take this opportunity to welcome Ms. Agneta Ucko, LWF Deputy General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation. We rejoice in having her with us. May the Lord bless her, as she continues to see the needs and problems of our Asian Lutheran churches in this region.

I should also like to welcome Dr. Péri Rasolondraibe, LWF/DMD Director, who has a special sympathetic understanding of the needs and challenges of our Asian Lutheran churches. Historically, we learn that originally Malagasy people came from the Asian continent. It must be true because we find lots of similar words in both Malagasy and Malay/Indonesian languages. Therefore, there is no doubt that he has become a dear friend of the churches in Asia. We extend a hearty welcome to him.

Let me also introduce to you our new colleague, Ms. Sally Kee, who is Regional Coordinator for Asia, based in Bangkok. She is a nice young lady. If you want to know more about her role and position, please meet with her and she will be glad to explain things to you.

To all of you, I extend a very warm welcome: church leaders, women and youth representatives and mission partners. I remember very well when welcoming participants of the Asian Church Leadership Conference in Chennai, India, Dr. K Rajaratnam, as host mentioned that, “Fellowship and friendship are the corner stones of the Asian churches.” This is true and is in line with one of the visions of the LWF – to strengthen the life of communion among member churches. Let us continue to build up this venture of communion, friendship and fellowship in serving our Lord and in doing His mission.

At the very start, I should like to express our deep appreciation to the local committee, led by Bishop Thien Fui Voo and Dr. Thu En Yu, who have prepared all things needed for this seminar and for the other two meetings prior to this seminar, i.e. the Asia Regional Coordination Committee and the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Asia meetings. The day-to-day contact between Dr. Thu En Yu and staff in Geneva was very helpful and highly appreciated.

Finally, let me conclude my welcoming remarks by reading the words of our Lord Jesus Christ written in Matthew 13:16-17:

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous people desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it”.

There are still many people in our continent who are not able to see what God revealed through Jesus Christ. Therefore, this new millennium should be a new era for the participation of Asian Lutheran churches in the mission of the churches.

May God make us see these things through this seminar and may this seminar be our response to the Lord’s mission so that more eyes in Asia may be opened to see what many have desired to see in mission.

Ginda P. Harahap
Area Secretary for Asia/Middle East

STATEMENT FROM THE SEMINAR

Preamble

Asian Lutheran churches in active mission endeavor face several challenges as they live and witness to the love of God in the midst of a multi-religious, socio-cultural and economic context. Asia, the cradle of major world religions, offers several opportunities and hindrances in God's mission. Asia constitutes demographic challenges, pervasive and growing poverty in the midst of an advancing economy, fundamentalism in the midst of religiosity, and the problems of women, youth and children with few opportunities for living life in all its fullness. The ever changing demography, the economic, technological, military and socio-political realities pose new challenges and opportunities for mission.

Coming from such a mission context, we the sixty-four participants representing twenty Asian Lutheran churches, constituent members of the Lutheran World Federation from fourteen countries, had an opportunity to reflect on the mission context and respond to the challenges that churches are facing. We met at the Seminari Teologi Sabah (Sabah Theological Seminary), Malaysia, from the 25th to the 30th of October 2000, for a seminar on the theme "*Mission in the Asian Context for the Third Millennium*", to revision and strengthen our churches' commitment for the mission of God in the region and in the world.

The seminar on Mission in Asia was the result of the LWF's Ninth Assembly commitment to a mission emphasis – to strengthen missiological and missionary efforts among LWF member churches in different cultural settings (Assembly, Hong Kong, 1997). The Seminar, at the same time, was also a response to the recommendation of the LWF Global Consultation on Churches in Mission, held in Nairobi 1998. The Asian Church Leadership Conference, held in Chennai in 1999, reaffirmed its commitment to renew and reinforce its mission in light of the challenges facing the Asian churches in the new millennium.

The *objectives* of the seminar were as follows:

- To strengthen churches' commitment for mission
- To deepen the understanding of mission in a changing context
- To develop a curriculum for training in new mission strategies.

To fulfill these objectives, the seminar received reflections on the following themes:

- *Mission in the Asian Context in the Third Millennium* – issues, questions, needs
- *Communion and Mission*
- *Missio Dei in the Asian Context*
- *Mission and Church Renewal*
- *Exploring Curriculum Formation*

The presentations focused on the mission challenges and opportunities in Asia and identified some major issues that need to be addressed anew. Reflections and discussions on the theme took place in plenary sessions. There was opportunity for additional conversations in small

group gatherings. Summaries of the small group findings were presented. The issues identified are as follows:

- ❑ Mission and reconciliation in the midst of violence
- ❑ The positive and negative impact of globalization in Asia
- ❑ Environmental protection
- ❑ Poverty and diakonic services
- ❑ Communal harmony in the context of religious plurality
- ❑ Spirituality in the context of growing charismatic movements
- ❑ Mission in an ecumenical context
- ❑ Global partnership in mission.

In the session on “Exploring Curriculum Formation” participants were reminded of the methodology of mission in the early church where Christians practiced tolerance, responding to challenges with love through service. It was emphasized that the curriculum formation for the month-long mission training program at the Sabah Theological Seminary and Gurukul Lutheran Theological College should therefore be the process of equipping the church for holistic mission for worship, proclamation, nurture and service.

The participants met again in small groups to discuss the following themes towards the preparation of a course curriculum for the training of people in the area of mission:

- Mission and Scriptures
- Mission and Context
- Mission and People of Diverse Faiths
- Mission Responses to Globalization
- Mission and the Church
- Mission and Healing Ministry/Service
- Communication, Culture and Mission

Findings

Discussions in the groups and in plenary, and the paper presentations all set the tone for greater clarity and understanding of God’s mission which called for a paradigm shift to meet the challenges and opportunities in the context of Asia. The traditional understanding of mission was challenged. What was emphasized instead was the need for deepening our commitment to koinonia or communion and the sharpening of our understanding of diakonia to meet the changing needs of mission in our diverse contexts.

The seminar enabled the participants to:

- ❖ reaffirm their Lutheran identity and ecumenical commitment;
- ❖ be prepared with a relevant mission mandate to face the challenges posed by the context of globalization, plurality of religions and poverty;
- ❖ reaffirm our faith to address the challenges posed by the growing charismatic movements;
- ❖ reflect further on what might constitute a renewal of faith in church life;
- ❖ challenge our traditional patterns of worship and nurture calling for renewal in our worship life;
- ❖ address the challenges of new communication technology for mission and the impact it is having, particularly on the youth.

Mission and Scripture

Missionary activities are authentic only in so far as they reflect participation in God's mission. To participate in God's mission is to participate in the movement of God's love towards all people. The New Testament is essentially a missionary document based on the love of God in Christ.

The group identified these issues which needed further reflection:

1. Old Testament studies on mission:
 - God in mission in the Old Testament
 - Abraham in mission
 - Mission of the Chosen People
 - Psalms as a book on mission
 - The King's mission (Solomon, etc.)
 - The Prophets' mission
2. New Testament studies on mission:
 - Jesus in Mission:
 - His life
 - His ministry
 - His teaching and his Great Commission
 - The meaning of the manger, the cross and the empty tomb for God's people
 - The challenge of the Kingdom of God on earth
 - The Holy Spirit in mission
 - Paul in mission
 - Revelation and mission.

Mission and Context

The following issues were identified as characteristic to the Asian context:

- The overall quality of life in Asia is poor
- Religious fundamentalism
- Cultural plurality
- Population explosion (3/5 of the total population of the world living in Asia)
- Abject poverty (out of 1.2 billion people living below poverty line, 800 million people live in Asia)
- The problems of migrant workers including those who migrate from the rural to the urban areas in search of a better life
- Violence particularly against women – prostitution, sexual abuse, and harassment
- HIV/AIDS
- Gender justice – in economic matters, politics and the church
- Youth issues – unemployment, drug addiction, etc.
- Child issues – child labor, child prostitution
- Casteism and racism – Dalits, indigenous communities
- Lack of information sharing – within and outside churches
- Media influences – loss of family values
- Human Rights issues.

In the midst of these challenges, the group reaffirmed the quest for a transformed mission with God's Kingdom prevailing. It called for a new understanding of mission, centered on Jesus' commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself". It also called for a paradigm shift

where the churches' mission should not only be vertical (between God and people) but both vertical and horizontal (between God and people and between people and people).

Understanding the multi-religious and multi-cultural society in the Asian context is of utmost importance. Dialogue between people of diverse faiths and among Christian communities needs to be encouraged, starting with common issues towards liberation of the oppressed. This should be done at different levels (clergy/lay, literates/illiterates, regional/local congregation, etc.) without distorting or destroying the culture of the people.

In spite of various forms of conflicts in Asia, the participants urged the Asian Christian community to continue to carry on the God-given responsibility to minister to and among the marginalized, the oppressed, the uprooted and the refugees. At the same time the church should be cognizant of its mission to the oppressors. The church is also called to protest God's creation. It should courageously challenge the governments/multi-national corporations involved in macro projects like mining and deforestation and logging in the name of globalization, rendering people homeless.

The participants raised a prophetic voice, calling for a much needed "self-cleansing" in the church hierarchy and offices. It was felt that only after such self-examination and introspection will the church be able to address the corruption in the high offices of the government. Without such an endeavor and an effort at repentance, the witness of the church will be a "dead" or meaningless one. They should be resurrected with Christ and do mission in a manner that follows the way of the Cross.

The participants called for establishing resource centers to share news and information at the local levels. The LWF is called to initiate this sharing of information with the member churches which in turn should flow both from the local to the global and from the global to the local.

This paradigm shift in the mission of the church should be introduced and included in theological education. The worship and service should be integrated and the diakonal department and the mission department should be challenged towards a holistic mission attune with our Lutheran heritage.

Mission and People of Diverse Faiths

Asia is the cradle of many world religions and hence Asians have always lived in a religiously pluralistic context, which enables us to understand deeply the meaning of harmonious living.

This understanding calls for a paradigm shift in mission. Mission is not about converting other people, but about transforming their lives. Such an understanding of mission requires a 'crucified' mind rather than a crusading mind. This calls for a genuine effort to comprehend the history, culture and religion of other people, who are our neighbors.

This paradigm shift identifies the need to develop what might be called "friendship evangelism" (human relationships) as a basis for our mission. We see 'the other' from the standpoint of their need as human beings while abandoning our spiritual arrogance and imperialism.

Dialogue was identified as essential for living in a religiously pluralistic context. It was proposed that the following kinds of dialogue be embraced:

- Dialogue in life – day-to-day encounters with people of diverse faiths
- Dialogue in discourse – enter into discussion on matters related to faith, the community and life
- Dialogue in spirituality – enter into discussions and seek common action on ethical issues
- Dialogue in action – joint action to help those in need without seeking conversion.

This requires respect for human dignity and acceptance of people of other faiths. Living together with people of other faiths will be a token of real dialogue in life. We learn something from other people and they also benefit out of our presence and help them to understand the Christian community. It was also proposed to use modern technology for dialogue and evangelism.

Mission Responses to Globalization

One of the major mission challenges identified was the disparity in resource sharing. Globalization has become an instrument of manipulation by giant corporations. The nature of globalization experiences today is another form of imperialism, colonization and colonialism. There is a drift in knowledge banks from the Asian countries to the first world countries.

The impact of modern communication technology particularly developing in the Asian context calls for a deeper understanding of the Cyber-Church, Electronic Church, Internet, etc. and their impact on the mission of the church. The participants also called for a proper training of our youth in this new communication technology and to use them for proclamation and service.

Mission and the Church

The theme “Mission and the Church” in its many aspects, namely mission and the local congregation, mission and theological education, mission and worship, and the holistic mission of the church. Stress was laid on the need to equip the local congregation for mission through training – lay men and women and youth for doing mission. Pastors need to be trained to be facilitators in the process of training the congregation for mission.

The church should seek to become a model community reflecting the meaning of God in Christ through life in fellowship with people of all faiths and service to the poor and through witnessing to God’s love in Jesus Christ.

It was also proposed that theological education should focus on training pastors for mission, in which equal emphasis must be placed on formal and non-formal, theoretical and practical aspects of mission. In order to make worship and liturgy more contextual, emphasis needs to be placed on indigenization of worship and the use of contemporary worship patterns that would attract the youth. Participation of lay leaders in conducting worship should also be encouraged.

The participants also recognized the holistic nature of mission that should focus on worship, nurture, evangelism and service; a multi-dimensional approach to involve the whole congregation in the mission of God. It was also realized that every congregation should be

encouraged to identify an immediate target community outside the congregation where they could carry out the mission in places such as a slum, etc.

Mission and Healing Ministry/Service

The participants identified four areas in church and society where broken relationships are apparent and calling for healing – the spiritual, physical, and psychological. Broken relationships in these areas are on the increase due to violation of Human Rights, poverty, discrimination, and psychological warfare that affects the individual's and the communities' normal living. Hence the participants called for greater emphasis on pastoral care and counseling which could be called as 'conflict resolution and reconciliation ministry' equipping lay people for the task. The LWF is requested to organize in-service training for pastors in pastoral care and counseling at regional levels. It was also pointed out that this should be understood as a 'ministry of empowerment'. Charismatic movements and their dimension of healing and its implications for our mission should also be studied. But for the churches to be an instrument of healing, it should be healed first from the many evils that plague its structures.

Communication, Culture and Mission

Communication is at the heart of mission and without communication there cannot be a fruitful mission. As it was pointed out, studying culture is an integral part of mission. Hence, culture and communication are essential elements of mission and as well as life. It was pointed out that intrapersonal, interpersonal, group communications are essential to build a sense of self, personal relations, to create dynamic communities and strengthen communion among churches and people which are essential in the task of mission. The Church can use mass media fruitfully in the mission, but it also needs to train children and parents to meet the challenges posed by mass media. More study is required on how to use the new methods of communication such as the Internet, and e-mail for productive networking and the many resources for education, proclamation and evangelism.

It was proposed that communication training be imparted to pastors as part of their theological training and also to lay people through non-formal training programs to equip the people for effective mission.

The proposals made in relation to the proposed curriculum are to be found in appendix A to this Statement.

The seminar also enabled the participants to reaffirm:

- ❖ The concept of the 'priesthood of all believers' with an emphasis that every baptized Christian is called to do mission. This should be used to strengthen the local congregations for mission.
- ❖ The Christian church in Asia should overcome its minority complex and discover the strength of living in communion.
- ❖ Mission encompasses proclamation, worship, nurture, care for creation, justice.

- ❖ In a multi-religious context we should have a crucified mind rather than a crusading mind that enables Christians to respect people of other faiths.

Commitment

We, the participants of the seminar, commit ourselves to disseminate what we have learnt in the seminar through the paper presentations, discussions in the groups, learning through our exposure, worship, and the informal exchange of ideas in our own churches. We call upon the member churches, seminaries and the Lutheran World Federation to:

- ❑ Energize the local congregations for mission
- ❑ Pray for the mission of the Church
- ❑ Encourage the churches to have a mission and communication study center to strengthen the mission of the Church
- ❑ Encourage member churches at different levels to enter into dialogue with people of other faiths and cooperate with people of other faiths in having joint action forums for mutual respect and address the needs of the community.

We also call upon:

- ❑ Theological seminaries to focus on that aspect of the Gospel that calls for transformation of society, concern for the poor, shalom and goodwill for all people
- ❑ ACTEAS and ARCC to explore the possibilities of setting up a Regional Resource Center (as a think-tank) for mission and to have a networking center to share our resources through Internet/e-mail, etc.
- ❑ Implement the one-month mission training programs
- ❑ LWF, through the United Nations, initiate a “Religion Law” to prohibit public condemnation and denunciation of religions with malicious intent.

Gratitude

Participants experienced ‘life in communion’ through participation in worship, prayer, bible studies and through various activities throughout the seminar from the start. For the inaugural worship conducted by the local Bishop and the felicitation organized by the local church, followed by the fellowship meal, the opportunity to worship with local congregations and sharing a meal with the members of the congregations, we are thankful. We express our gratitude to the local organizing committee under the leadership of Bishop Thein Fui Voo and Dr. Thu En Yu, Principal of Sabah Theological Seminary.

The Seminary not only provided the venue for the seminar, but also hosted the participants in comfortable housing and with delicious food, which kept all the participants joyful, hale and healthy. We express our gratitude to the Principal, Dr. Thu En Yu, the faculty, the non-teaching staff and the students who cheerfully accommodated us and nourished us.

Eminent scholars in their own merit fed the participants with very nourishing presentations and led group discussions to discover a new paradigm shift for mission in the Asian context. We, the participants, hope and pray that the directions discovered in this seminar would be implemented in our context to the glory of God; hence, we do express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all the seminar leaders.

Our thanks and appreciation to the LWF staff – Ms. Agneta Ucko, Deputy General Secretary of LWF, Dr. Péri Rasolondraibe, Director of the Department for Mission and Development, Rev. Ginda Harahap, Asia Secretary, and Ms. Sally Kee, Asia Regional Coordinator, for ably facilitating the seminar and Ms. Karin Kaukorat, Administrative Secretary – Asia Desk, DMD for her assistance in all matters contributing to the success of the seminar.

Above all, we thank God for this experience and which enabled us to discover the new meaning of mission in the Asian context and we do pray to God to strengthen us to meet the challenges of mission and rededicate us for this mission which God has called us to do.

DISCUSSION ON CURRICULUM

1. Preparatory Period

1.1.LWF, Gurukul, STS-Sabah

- 1.1.1. Be clear on criteria for selection of trainees (e.g. sub-regional and gender balance, academic requirements, experience, etc...
- 1.1.2. Discuss desirability of homogeneous groups (cf. Language, category, concentration, etc...)
- 1.1.3. Discuss possible concentration for each training center

1.2.Trainees

- 1.2.1. To submit bio-data to LWF to enable selection
- 1.2.2. To research and write papers on local church mission history and on-going activities, challenges and burning issues relating to local contexts,
- 1.2.3. To experience "immersion time" into local realities of the training centers before training sessions begin.

2. Training Period

2.1.Training methods

- 2.1.1. Should not follow monotonous lecture patterns but be more interactive (seminar style) using group dynamics,
- 2.1.2. Context and theory interaction necessary : field studies, case studies,
- 2.1.3. Workshops for competence building (e.g. communicative skills and know-how, public relations, etc...)
- 2.1.4. Group projects in community after study hours.

2.2.Time Table

- 2.2.1. Should not be too rigid or too tight but flexible
- 2.2.2. More time needed per subject
- 2.2.3. Reduce the number of subjects. Suggest: use of "cluster" of topics to form "unit" subject. Example: Bible study, Biblical foundation, Early Church history can be clustered into a unit occupying a time bloc that connects to a field study.
- 2.2.4. Free time for participants for personal up-building
- 2.2.5. Reduce training hours from 25/week to 20/ week , allowing breaks between classes,
- 2.2.6. Add one more week !?

2.3 Content

2.3.1. Missing in the proposed Curriculum

APPENDIX A
to Statement

- Theology of Mission
- Justice issues: women and children
- Counseling and pastoral care
- Communicative skills and know-how

2.3.2. Needing added emphasis

- Thematic Bible studies
- Cross-cultural studies
- Communication to be integral part of every topic of study
- Spirituality not taught but “caught”; to be experienced throughout the entire program (e.g. Bible study, devotion, interaction with community...)

2.3.3. Enlarged description of content: see group reports!

2.4. Resource Materials

- 2.4.1. Papers presented at Seminar on Mission be part of curriculum preparation,
- 2.4.2. LWF study materials should be used for the training,
- 2.4.3. Available materials from theological institutions and churches also to be used

2.5. Medium of Instruction

- 2.5.1. Primarily English, but flexibility and other alternatives need to be explored,
- 2.5.2. Providing remedial help for English should be considered.

3. *Follow-up Period*

- 3.1. One week for post-training visitation program (Cf. 2.2.6.)
- 3.2. Evaluation of each trainee: write a paper at end of training ?
- 3.3. Evaluation of Training Program: to be elaborated.



One of the discussion groups



Dr. Péri Rasolondraibe, DMD Director, speaking to the participants
To his left: Dr. Thomas Yu, Taiwan
To his right: Ms. Agneta Ucko, LWF Deputy General Secretary

DISCUSSION STARTERS + GROUP REPORTS

Rev. Samer Azar/Amman

"MISSION (OF THE CHURCH) AND SCRIPTURES"

If well searched and digested, the Bible can help us discover God's involvement with the whole creation and God's mission for us.¹

1. What is Scripture/Scriptures, and what is Mission?

A. SCRIPTURES:

Scripture (Lat. Scriptura, rendering the Greek *graphe*, which means 'a writing' and is used some 50 times in the NT for some or all of the OT) is the historic Judaeo-Christian name for the specific literature that the church receives as divine instruction, that is, as God's own witness to himself in the form of human witness concerning his work, will, ways and how mankind should worship him. 'Bible' by contrast, is a latter-day western coinage, the fruit of a medieval misreading of the Greek *biblia* (books) as a feminine singular Latin noun.

'Scripture' is used in essentially the same sense in both the singular and the plural: 'the Scriptures' are all the items that make up the Bible, viewed as carrying divine content, and 'Scripture' is the same material viewed as one organic unit of divine teaching.²

The Bible is a library. Like many other libraries it has a wealth of information and insight. It is a central source for articulating our faith in God, how we travel with God, and how we live in community with one another. If well searched and digested, the Bible can help us discover God's involvement with the whole creation and God's mission for us. It has nourished the Christian faith over the years. The Bible is a good for those who are engaged in a struggle of prayer and in the battles of faith in the world. The Bible reveals the depth of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and it confronts us with a mirror, a reflection of what our lives are supposed to be.³

The Bible is the authority in all matters of faith. Our Lutheran forefathers state, "we believe, teach and confess that the Prophetic and Apostolic writings of the Old and the New Testaments are the only rule and norm to which all doctrines and

teachers alike must be appraised and judged... . Other writings of ancient and modern teachers whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures... ." (The formula of Concord 1577)4.

B. MISSION:

Mission conveys the biblical idea of 'being sent', classically expressed in Jesus' saying, 'As the father has sent me, I am sending you' (Jn 20:21). Missiology is the ordered study of the Christian Church's Mission. As such it is a discipline within theology incorporating a number of strands.

1. Historical study surveys the growth and the expansion of the Church at various periods and assesses its impact on different societies and cultures.
2. Systematic Theology studies the interaction of Christian faith with secular philosophies and ideologies and with other systems of belief.
3. Ethical studies are incorporated into missiology where the church has a responsibility to declare God's will for the whole of life.
4. Pastoral Theology seeks ways to instruct new converts and integrate them into the Church.
5. Biblical Study, which is the focus of this paper, investigates the basis of the Church's mission in the Missio Dei (Mission of God), the calling of Israel to be a light to all nations (Is. 49:6) and Jesus' commission to his disciples to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth and the end of time (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).5

The Church can't claim that its mission is identical to the Missio Dei. Mission is a movement from God to the world; the church is an instrument for that mission. Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the triune God, for the sake of the world- a mission in which the church is privileged to participate.

Missionary activities are authentic only insofar as they reflect participation in God's mission. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.6

Let us concentrate on the main two functions of the Church as being sent by Jesus to participate in the movement of God's love toward people as articulated in the Bible:

1. EVANGELISM
2. SOCIAL CONCERN

EVANGELISM:

The one topic emphasized in both accounts of Jesus' last words to his disciples is evangelism. In Matthew 28:19 he instructs them, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." In Acts 1:8 he says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." This was the final point Jesus made to his disciples. It appears that he regarded evangelism as the very reason for their being.

The call to evangelize is a command. Having accepted Jesus as Lord, the disciples had brought themselves under his rule and were obligated to do whatever he asks. For he had said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15); "he who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me" (v. 21a); and "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Jn. 15:14). If the disciples truly loved their Lord, they would carry out his call to evangelize. It was not an optional matter for them.

The disciples were not sent out merely in their own strength, however. Jesus prefaced his commission with the statement, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). Having all authority, he commissioned the disciples as his agents. This they had the right to go and evangelize all nations. Further, Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and that they would consequently receive power. So they were both authorized and enabled for the task. Moreover, they were assured that he was not sending them off on their own. Although he was to be taken from them bodily, he would nonetheless be with them spiritually to the very end of the age (Matt. 28:20).

Note also the extent of the commission: it is all-inclusive. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus speaks of "all nations," and in Acts 1:8 he gives a specific enumeration: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the

earth." Differing issues are involved at the various levels of this command.

Jerusalem was, of course, the immediate vicinity while it was not the home territory of the inner circle of disciples (they were Galileans), it was the site of Pentecost. Since the first converts would have many close contacts in Jerusalem, it was natural for the church to witness and grow there. Jerusalem was also the difficult place to witness, however, for it was there that the scandal in connection with the events of Christ's last days, and especially his humiliating death by crucifixion, had occurred. There would be a natural distrust of and perhaps even revulsion against any presentation of the message of the Savior: on the other hand, one advantage of witnessing in Jerusalem was that the people live close enough to each other to unite into one congregation if they chose to do so.

Beyond Jerusalem, the disciples were to be witnesses in "all Judea." This area was basically homogeneous in its thinking and customs, for its inhabitants were Jews, and Judean Jews at that. Yet most of them were too far removed from the center in Jerusalem to gather there. Consequently, fulfillment of this part of the commission would result in the establishment of additional congregations.

Perhaps the most distasteful part of the commission, at least as far as the disciples were concerned, was the third part- "in Samaria." This took them to the people whom they found most difficult to love, and who would probably be least receptive to their message in that it would be brought by Jews. The Jews and the Samaritans had been engaged in conflict for a long time. The friction dated back to the time of the Jews' return from the Babylonian captivity. Samaritans were half-breed Jews who represented the intermarriage of the Israelites left behind by the Assyrians and various foreign colonists whom the Assyrians then sent in to help repopulate the area. When the Jews returned from Babylon and began to rebuild the temple, the Samaritans offered to help, but their offer was spurned. From that time on, there was friction between the two groups. This is evident in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry. When Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for a drink of water, who responded, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink

of me, a woman of Samaria?" John comments, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (Jn 4:9). This was an unusual encounter, for Jesus and his disciples did not ordinarily pass through Samaria, preferring rather to cross over the Jordan River and travel through Perea in their journeys between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. Jesus lent additional force to his parable about loving one's neighbour by making the hero of it a Samaritan (Lu. 10:29-37). The Jews meant to insult Jesus when they asked, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (Jn. 8:48). It is likely that the former taunt (to which Jesus did not reply) was intended to be the more humiliating of the two. Surely the Samaritans were the people whom the Jews would have least liked to see included in the church with them, yet Jesus said, "You shall be my witnesses in ...Samaria."

* Finally, the disciples were to bear witness "to the end of the earth." There was no geographical restriction upon the commission. They were to take the gospel message everywhere, to all nations and every type of people. They could not, of course, accomplish this on their own. Rather, as they won converts, those converts, would in turn evangelize others. Thus the message would spread in ever widening circles, and the task would eventually be completed.

Therefore, if the church is to be faithful to its Lord and bring joy to his heart, it must be engaged in bringing the gospel to all people. This involves going to people whom we like and people whom we may be nature tend to dislike. It extends to those who are unlike us. And it goes beyond our immediate sphere of contact and influence. In a very real sense, local evangelism, church extension or church planting, and world missions are all the same thing. The Church must work in all of these areas. If it does not, it will become spiritually ill, for it will be attempting to function in a way its Lord never intended.

SOCIAL CONCERN:

It is the responsibility of the church to perform acts of Christian love and compassion for both believers and non-Christians. It is

clear that Jesus cared about the problems of the needy and the suffering. He healed the sick and even raised the dead on occasion. If the church is to carry on his ministry, it will be engaged in some form of ministry to the needy and the suffering. That Jesus has such an expectation of believers is evident in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lu. 10: 25-37). Jesus told this parable to the lawyer who, understanding that one can inherit eternal life by loving God with one's whole being and one's neighbour as oneself, asked who his neighbour was. In answering the question, Jesus also explained what it means to love one's neighbour as oneself. The good Samaritan, although he had nothing to do with the assault on the man going down to Jericho, took it upon himself to care for the victim's needs even at personal cost, inconvenience, and possible danger to himself. Since love of neighbour is closely linked by the law to love of God and involves actions like those of the good Samaritan, the Christian church must be concerned about hurt and need in the world. Indeed, Jesus suggests in Matthew 25:31-46 that the one sign by which true believers can be distinguished from those who make empty professions is acts of love which are done in Jesus' name and emulate his example, concern for the fatherless, the widow, and the sojourner is appropriate for those who worship a God who himself displays such concern (Deut. 10:17-19).

Emphasis on social concern carries over into the Epistles as well. James is particularly strong in stressing practical Christianity. Consider, for example, his definition of religion: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27). He speaks out sharply against showing favoritism to the rich, an evil which occurred even within the church (2:1-11). He excoriates verbal encouragement unaccompanied by action? "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (2:15-17). John is equally pointed: "if anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear

children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth"(1Jn. 3:17-18). James and John, the beloved disciple, had learned well what Jesus had taught to be the meaning of "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Social concern includes the condemning of unrighteousness as well. Amos and several other Old Testament prophets spoke out emphatically against the evil and corruption of their day.; John the Baptist likewise condemned the sin of Herod, the ruler of his day, even though it cost him his liberty(Luke3:19-20) and eventually even his life(mark 6:1-29). The church is to show concern and take action wherever it sees need, hurt, or wrong. There will be differences of opinion as to the strategies and tactics that should be employed. In some cases, the church will work simply to alleviate the hurt, that is, to treat the consequences of the problem. In others, it will act to change the circumstances that have produced the problem. There will be times when the church acting collectively will be able to accomplish more than will Christians acting individually; in other situations the reverse will be true.⁷

In short, we can say that Mission is deeply rooted in the Bible, where we discover God's involvement with the whole creation. Participating in mission is participating in the movement of God's *Love* toward people, since God is the fountain of love. Mission is incumbent on the church. Otherwise it becomes spiritually ill.

"For the Church was not brought into being by our Lord simply to exist as an end in itself. Rather it was brought into being to fulfill the Lord's intention for it. It is to carry the Lord's ministry in the world-to perpetuate what he did and to do what he would do were he still here."¹⁰

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GROUP ONE

MISSION AND SCRIPTURES

The Rev. Samer Azar presented his paper “Mission (of the Church) and Scripture” as a basis of discussion. After a long and critical discussion on the paper and some other related documents, the group was able to focus on some important issues:

1. The relationship of the mission of God (Missio Dei) and the mission of the Church.
2. The role of the church in mission such as:
 - a. Proclamation in Word & Sacrament
 - b. Fellowship
 - c. Service
 - d. Worship – music relevant to the youth should be considered
 - e. Teaching (education)

The group suggests that the contents of the course shall include the following:

- I. God’s mission in the O.T.
 1. Abraham in mission
 2. Mission of the chosen people
 3. Psalms as a book on mission
 4. The king’s mission (Solomon, etc.)
 5. The prophet’s mission
- II. God’s mission in the N.T.
 1. Jesus in mission
 - his life
 - his ministry
 - his teaching
 - his Great Commission
 2. The Holy Spirit in mission
 3. Paul in mission
 4. Peter, John in mission

The group also recommended that the paper presented by Rev. Azar and the paper prepared by Gurukul Lutheran Theological College: “Biblical Foundation of Mission” be approved as references for the instructors/seminaries who prepare the course.

The group also considered the “Training in Mission Time Table” and come up with the following suggestions:

1. The courses be reduced from 5 to 4
2. The number of hours be reduced from 30 hours to 20 hours
3. That all the class hours be reduced to 50 minutes per class with break of 10 minutes.

LWF Asia Seminar on Mission

October 25-30, 2000, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

**LWF Seminar on Mission in Asia
October 25-30, 2000
Kota Kinabalu, Sabha, Malaysia**

"Mission in the Asian Context for the Third Millennium"

- Dr. K. Rajaratnam

'Mission and Context'

'Mission' - its meaning and purpose unfold as the context is identified. Therefore before we analyse the 'Mission Task', we identify the 'Mission Context'.

As we recognise Jesus Christ, as the Lord of history and the Lord of all nations, the entire history and contemporary life and struggles of the peoples of Asia constitute the context for Christian Mission.

Let us therefore briefly analyse the context:

Demographic Dimension

As Mission is amongst the people, let us take a look at the demographic challenge of Asia. Asia has in its abode $2/5^{\text{th}}$ of the world's population taking China and India alone together.

Figures for Asian Countries (See Apendix I)

The most spectacular dimension of Asian population is the determination of the Asian people to overcome traditional poverty and compete with the rest of the world for a status of equality and dignity particularly in terms of economic living standards and developing modern technology.

China has made gigantic strides in emerging forward from traditional backwardness into a veritable economic giant and military power.

East Asia led by Japan and other New Industrial countries, have astounded the world by their achievements in beating Europe and America, in the competitive game of capitalism and modern technology.

Other countries of Asia including India and Indonesia, have the potential to take their places as equal and effective partners in economic and technological realms and are likely to reach higher goals of performance before long.

Indeed Asia is on the threshold of emerging as the most powerful continent in the world - in global trade, industry, technology - especially Information Technology and human resources development. This is the positive side.

Poverty

With a huge population in its abode, Asia is unable to feed all its people and hence poverty is the hallmark of Asia. 1.2 billion people below poverty line (World Development Report 1998) in the world are distributed regionally as follows:

South Asia	-	522 million (Majority of them in India - Dalits and Tribals)
East Asia & Pacific	-	278 million
Sub Sahara & Africa	-	292 million
Latin America & Caribbean	-	78 million
Europe & Central Asia	-	24 million
Middle East & North Asia	-	6 million

Multi-Religious Continent

Asia has given birth to all major religions of India, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam in addition to many other religions. All of them are living faiths. Their adherents are not only increasing in number but all these religions are vibrant, aggressively dynamic and expanding in space and numbers. In Asia, Christianity is a tiny minority but has impacted powerfully over the past 300 years over the entire continent. That is the real challenge of Christianity.

Multi-Cultural Continent

Asia is the seat of ancient civilisations, philosophies, religious scriptures and have developed spiritual and cultural values of life and apart from fine arts, communication, folklores of ancient wisdom and indeed very attractive variety of cuisines - perhaps the most unbeatable in the entire world!

Resurgence of Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism - of Religion, or even in the realm of economics, political, social and cultural is a serious threat to progress, peace and harmony. In recent years we have witnessed to the serious consequence of aggressive fundamentalism all over the world. But in recent past the Churches in Asia, in particular in India and Indonesia have suffered grievously at the hands of religious fundamentalism, Hinduism and Islam, respectively. While Churches exposed to fundamentalist attacks, suffer enormously - including loss of life, we need to remember that the Church has always grown on the blood of martyrs. India has experienced this growth of the Church, in terms of solidarity of all the denominations of the Church - Roman Catholic - Protestant and Orthodox and I am sure even Indonesia would have experienced the same sense of solidarity in the country. In India, the Hindu fundamentalists who have been and still are hostile to Christianity represent a tiny section of the Hindu community. The vast majority of the Hindus, represented by the Press and secular politics were in fact the champions of freedom of religion and condemned strongly the Hindu Fundamentalists.

Thus the strength of the Church was visible during those days. The struggle with these hostile elements is not over yet and the Church has to be vigilant in the sense it should continue to witness and serve society with renewed faith and courage.

The Youth

Youth presents a great challenge to the Mission Task of the Church.

Look at the statistics of Youth, as represented in the following Table:

Particulars		Asia	Asia (Excluding China)
Population Ages 10-24 (millions)	2000	1031	714
	2025	1048	772
Population Ages 10-24 (% of Total) - 2000		28	29
% Enrolled in Secondary School - 1980	Males	48	45
	Females	34	31
% Enrolled in Secondary School Latest Year	Males	62	57
	Females	51	44
Average age of First Marriage* - All Women		21	21
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)		2.8	3.3
% TFR Attributed to Births by Ages 15-19		11	-
Population Ages 15-19 (in millions) 2000		342	242
% Illiterate	Males	19	26
	Females	31	41
% Currently Married (Females)		20	27
% Giving Birth by Age 20		29	40

Do our youth ministries take these challenges into our account?

To sum up, the contours of the context of Asia therefore are, the demographic challenge, high potential of economic, technological and military power, massive poverty, multi-religious and cultural challenges and the threat of religious fundamentalism taking the form of aggressive hostility to Christianity and the challenge of the enormity of the population of youth who are without opportunities for social and economic growth.

What is our Mission in this context?

Asia is a vast geographical entity. There are cultural strands that are common to most countries in Asia that can safely be called Asian. Nevertheless, each country in Asia is specific, in terms of religious, cultural and economic challenges. Therefore each country must explore its own context and mission response formulated accordingly.

Let me illustrate - Where poverty is dominant like in India, the Church must unhesitatingly take up poverty on its agenda for mission. In India at least 500 millions are poor - half of them tribals and dalits, miserably poor. The age old social (caste) system of India consigns them because of birth, to poverty and slavery. How can Christian Church ignore that challenge? Millions of people, entrenched in miserable and irretrievable poverty condemned by their religion to slavery, is the biggest challenge in India both for social reforms and the mission of the Church.

Multi-religious Context

Church in Asia has also another unique challenge: to live in peace, harmony and in state of dynamic witness in relation to other living faiths, like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam closely related to these challenges is the fundamentalist challenge. These two are inter-related. Other faiths challenge the uniqueness of Christianity. What is the faith of the Church, how does the Church witness to her faith, in the context especially of claim of all religions to truth. This is an ongoing mission task.

Here our theological understanding of other religions also must be pursued. Theological education of the Churches is crucial in this task. In that sense theological education is a significant vehicle of mission. This takes us to the other realm of mission task - peace, justice, care of creation and human rights - which are essential components of human life. Asian societies and other countries have seen situations where peace and justice are denied, care of God's creation is ignored and human rights grossly violated.

The Church's response to these challenges must take the form of Church's ministries.

The human development of millions, denied the basic needs of life, should also be a top priority in Church's mission task.

Evangelism

Evangelism has been poorly understood as verbal preaching and adding to the Church membership. In India, the fundamentalists have raised the question of 'conversion' calling it anti-Hindu, undermining Indian culture and alienating the loyalty of Indians to their own country and creating extra-territorial loyalties. Indeed these accusations have been denied strongly but the church in India believes that the fundamentalists' real complaint is against the church working with the poor is empowering the poor thus liberating the poor from the slavery of the outcastes. Hence, the Church's answer is, serve the poor, liberate them from their caste slavery, extend human rights, give them social equality and dignity - this emancipation of the Tribals and Dalits especially for us India, particularly the Lutheran Church is a matter of high priority in the agenda for Mission.

Indian case is only cited as an example for mission in social context applicable to any country.

The Church coming to grip with Mission Task, in the wider context of religious, social, human rights and other such challenges - will give its context a central place in any nation and its witness becomes relevant and powerful, provided the Church is prepared for these challenges.

Asian Population according to Population Clock as on 04-09-2000

S/N	COUNTRY	Population
1	China	1269385100
2	India	1000848550
3	Indonesia	216108345
4	Pakistan	152136840
5	Bangladesh	127117967
6	Japan	126596700
7	Philippines	79345812
8	Vietnam	79128752
9	Iran	67645254
10	Thailand	60609046
11	Korea (South)	45542053
12	Myanmar	44339603
13	Afghanistan	25824882
14	Nepal	24302653
15	Iraq	22427150
16	Taiwan	22113250
17	Malaysia	21917417
18	Saudi Arabia	21504613
19	North Korea	20646620
20	Sri Lanka	19144875
21	Yemen	17763435
22	Syria	17213871
23	Cambodia	11626520
24	Jordan	6597136
25	Israel	6188054
26	Laos	5407453
27	Lebanon	3562699
28	Singapore	3531600
29	Mangolia	2617379
30	Oman	2446645
31	United Arab Emeritus	2419119
32	Bhutan	2033258
33	Kuwait	1725158
34	Cyprus	784955
35	Qatar	723542
36	Bahrain	629090
37	Macao	490901
38	Brunei	322982
39	Maldives	300220

GROUP 2

MISSION AND CONTEXT

Group Members

Dr. K. Rajaratnam (Presenter)
Rev. Wesley Kigasung (Chairperson)
Dr. Robinson Radjagukguk
Rev. Shigenori Miyazawa

Ms. Pang Mei Yee
Ms. Medilita Tanduyog
Ms. Chrismarie
Ms. Vidhyarani Velure

Dr. K. Rajaratnam presented a paper in which he said that the context of Asia constituted a demographic challenge, high potential of economic, technological and military power, poverty, multi-religious and cultural challenges and threat of religions. Fundamentalism in hostility to Christianity, and the challenge of youths without opportunities for social and economic growth. Underlining the fact that Christianity is a minority in Asia, he said, it had nevertheless affected powerfully, over the past three hundred years, the entire continent, which was home to several major religions. On resurgence of fundamentalism, he said, while churches exposed to fundamentalist attacks suffered enormously, including loss of life, Christians needed to remember that the church had always grown on the blood of martyrs as in the case of India and Indonesia. He urged the church to be vigilant in continuing to witness and serve society with renewed faith and courage.

Based on the presentation, the group was involved in in-depth discussion and highlighted the various issues which are as follows:

1. Cause and effect of the problem
2. Quality of life – Asians' struggle from birth to tomb
3. Religious fundamentalism
4. Multicultural society
5. Population explosion (3/5 of the total population of the world living in Asia)
6. Abject poverty (out of 1.2 billion people living below poverty line, 800 million people live in Asia)
7. Status of immigrant workers, including migration from rural to urban areas, expecting "Green Life", leading to various forms of violence, particularly against women like CSW, sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS, etc.
8. Gender justice
9. Youth issues – unemployment, drug addicts, etc.
10. Children's issues – child labour, child prostitution
11. Casteism – Dalits, indigenous community
12. Information sharing – within and outside churches
13. Awareness raising among the church leaders
14. Media influence – radio & TV ministry
15. Degrading of family values
16. Human Rights issues

Members shared their own experiences from their respective context. And it was good to explore more commonalities, which reaffirm our "oneness" in Jesus Christ, giving strength to address these burning issues with one spirit. The members focussed their discussion more specifically on Mission in its new creation. We tried to find answers to the question "What is our Mission?". It was a collective quest for a Transformed Mission with

God's Kingdom prevailing. Not with much analysis of the past and starting from the present context, a New Missionary Work has to start, encircling around Jesus' Commandment. "Love your neighbour as yourself".

The churches' mission should not only be vertical (between God and people) but rather be both vertical & horizontal (between God & people and between people & people). Our Gospel proclamation should be people-centred,. The Seminaries and ACTEAS are requested to address this issue more vehemently. Need was also felt for revising the existing curriculum (if it is not yet inclusive).

Understanding the multi-religious and multi-cultural society in our Asian context is of utmost important. Caution has to be taken about the charismatic movements. It was stressed to make worship & liturgy more attractive, with more lively music to retain the young people of the church, who are distracted.

Dialogue between people of other faiths and among the Christian community need to be encouraged, starting with common issues, such as liberation of the oppressed. This should be done at different levels (clergy/lay; literates/illiterates, synod level/local congregation, etc.), without distorting the culture. Christ's presence should be evident in the dialogue, which would enable us to carry on our mission in a multicultural and multi-religious society.

There is a dire need for a paradigm shift in the Mission of the church which needs to be inculcated in theological education. Worship and service should be integrated, and the diakonia and mission departments of the church should be challenged towards a holistic mission of Lutheran heritage. The church should take the responsibility to protect God's creation. There should be courageous steps taken to challenge the governments/multi-national corporations involved in macro projects, like mining, deforestation and logging, in the name of globalisation, leaving millions of people homeless. Our mission should also include ministry to the uprooted people.

In spite of the various forms of conflicts in Asia, we urge the Christian Community to continue to carry on the God-given responsibility to minister among the marginalized and oppressed people like the refugees, and the oppressors. The churches should be sensitive to the various issues affecting our neighbourhood, react to the situation and be of service.

The prophetic role of the church leaders is very much needed to address the corruption in the church so that after "self-cleansing" the corruption in the government could be addressed as well. Resource centres should be started in the churches/seminaries for information sharing and analysis of the problems. Theological educators and the trainees should be aware of the various happenings in and outside the church, nation and region.

The LWF should initiate the sharing of information with the member churches, which in turn should share the news with the local congregations.

Finally, the churches should repent for being "dead" and should be resurrected with Christ and do the Mission in a more meaningful and fruitful way.

GROUP 2

MISSION & CONTEXT

Comments on Curriculum

1. Too tight a schedule.
2. Daily assignments, if given, would require more time, which is not found in the time table.
3. Free time / personal time would be needed.
4. Worship is missing (morning & evening devotion for reflection).
5. Since the course is really intense, would it be for experienced persons only?
6. Hope the churches would be given clear cut criteria for selecting the delegates, bearing in mind the language barrier, heterogeneous nature of the group, etc. Each year one category (lay/clergy/church worker) could be selected so that a homogenous group be formed for easier and more effective inter-personal interaction.
7. Theology of Mission is missing.
8. Prior orientation of the participants is very much needed. LWF & Gurukul/Sabah Seminary to work out the strategy in equipping the church / participants about the training.
9. Selected church?
10. Justice issues – women – to include children.
11. To include children.
12. Counselling aspects is missing.
13. Cross cultural study needs to be included.
14. A theme should be fixed for the Bible Study, which should direct the whole day's proceedings. (It could be from other books of the Bible too).
15. Explanation needed for selecting the book of Acts only?
16. Each session should have time allocated for interaction.
17. Participatory approaches to be considered to break the monotony of lecture type.
18. Opportunity for cultural exposure would be appreciated.
19. Two participants from each church / country would be preferable (if possible).
20. Resource study material looks exclusively from Gurukul. Maybe the LWF study materials could be used as well.
21. We propose that the training be extended by one more week.

LWF Asia Seminar on Mission

October 25-30, 2011 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Mission and People of Diverse Faiths

I. The Calling

God calls us to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations. Two-thirds of the world's population lives in Asia, yet Asian Christians only comprise seven percent of Asia's peoples.

God's plan of abundant life for the whole of creation is diminished and destroyed by sin and conflict, suffering and oppression. God in Christ Jesus calls us to participate in word and deed for the renewal and transformation of the life of the whole world. It is an urgent call in today's world.

Asian Churches have tended to emphasize certain aspects of the Christian Gospel and in so doing have confined the revelation of Jesus Christ within specified limits. The consequence of this tendency is that Asian Churches have, consciously or unconsciously, alienated Asian peoples from the Christian community. If the Churches in Christ's name alienate others, and separate themselves from the people of other faiths, there can be no true identification with the Asian populace – especially with their suffering and struggles. As a result, the Churches isolate themselves from the majority.

The small but significant Christian minority amidst a vast populace is a factor, which must be taken into account by the Churches in the development and outworking of a theology of mission. The figures mentioned above underline the immensity of the task facing Asian Churches and the urgency of prioritizing mission as the Churches move into the Third Millennium – a mission to both propagate the Gospel and to root it in the rich soil of Asian society and culture. Such a task requires more than just commitment and vision, it demands wisdom and resources. The following are a few essential approaches:

II. Mission in the Pluralistic Society

God is the Lord of history. He works within the history of humankind. In revealing Himself in history, God works through human culture. The Churches must attempt to understand the will of God within their own social and cultural contexts. Similarly, they must preach God's message within such contexts. As such, the theology of mission is conceived and created within various and different contexts. A theology of mission devoid of its context is meaningless – empty religious jargon.

Contextualization is a passionate cry for the recognition of the significance of this time and this place in understanding the meaning of life. Thus, it pays attention to the process of change, social justice and the human struggle, that is, the actual life situation. "It is letting theology speak in and through that context."

The Churches must recognize, acknowledge and face squarely the realities of Asian life while continuously reflecting on the message and task of the Gospel. This can enable the abstract Word of God to become "incarnated" within human experiences thus fulfilling Christ's mission:

"to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1-2).

Therefore, the Churches must concern themselves with both the messages of Christ and its practical interpretation in service of the masses. The proclamation of the Gospel must highlight the prophetic and authentic elements of the biblical message within the real life situation. This necessitates a practical expression of that message through a demonstration of a loving, caring concern derived from an identification with the peoples. Thus the Churches must learn to:

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position" (Romans 12:15-16).

The Lord Jesus identified with the poor. He demonstrated solidarity with minorities – with the persecuted, the oppressed, and the disadvantaged. Such identification strengthened rather than undermined His proclamation of God's Kingdom as it enriched the meaningfulness of "incarnation".

As Christianity spread to Asia, Western missionaries repeatedly avoided the theological problems raised by the local contexts. The Churches became the refuge for personal salvation but were bereft of social significance and social responsibility. This was despite the fact that a handful of Asian Christian thinkers dealt with problems such as the relationship of Christianity to national crises and social reconstruction. For example, in China, *T C Chau* and *Y C Wu* started to promote issues concerning the relationship of Church and State as early as the 1920's. Unfortunately, the Churches did not develop these ideas until Asian societies began to undergo social and political awakenings. At this point, the Churches were confronted with the realization that mission must involve cultural, political and social concerns. The following are illustrations.

(a) Theology Of Ecumenicity In China

Since the 1960's, the numerical strength of the Church in China has grown unprecedentedly from millions to tens of millions. This is because Chinese Churches have discovered the Gospel themes that the masses crave – the message of reconciliation within the context of diversity. Thus in serving the society, the Churches, although of differing political persuasion and denominational background, nevertheless work together to achieve common objectives.

Bishop *K H Ting* once said, "Chinese reformers ... aim to transform the life of the people for the better ... While making a personal choice, the interests of others and the socialist motherland are more often taken into consideration. We admire the immense undertaking of transforming the society and the people. We hope it can be successful. This is the least Christians can demonstrate their love."

This is in fact the theology of *John Calvin*. Calvin considered all worldly institutions as vehicles, which Christians should strive to employ to improve the society. As such, the Churches ought to co-operate with Governments. Divine authorities and secular authorities ought to collaborate in the spirit of mutual respect in order to achieve common objectives.

To a very large extent, the Church in China has already shed the image of a foreign religion. If external influences are absent, as post-denominationalized, overwhelmingly patriotic and love-thy-neighbour entities, Chinese Churches are not far away from being enterprising models of mission.

(b) Theology Of Friendship In Malaysia

Malaysia is a multi-religious and multi-racial predominantly Islamic society that enjoys a volatile and fragile harmony. To maintain peace and justice, national integration and reconciliation are vital ingredients. A theology of mission embracing a strong sense of community is a possible starting point to break down traditional barriers. This approach is characterized by a new attitude on the part of Christians, which involves a radical friendship imbued with the spirit of reconciliation and humility.

In the book *"Christians and Muslims Together,"* it is observed that it is difficult to shift the deep-seated and often prejudicial Christian attitudes towards members of other faiths. It is suggested that Christians in encounter with other faiths need,

*"an attitude of openness and humility before another, a willingness to hear and respect points of view, and a desire to let other people be what they are, rather than attempting to make them like oneself as a pre-condition for friendship."*⁷

How do Christians articulate the theology of mission where conversion is unwelcome and triumphalism inappropriate? The answer lies in a theology of friendship that emphasizes the importance of a community. There must be a strong sense of communion as a starting point for building new relationship. In other words, friendship evangelism is the starting point for mission.

At the initiative of the Christians, an inter-religious body was formed in 1984. This inter-religious body was named the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism⁸. It provides an avenue of mutual consultation and helps reduce inter-religious misunderstanding and hostility and therefore enhances religious reconciliation in the country. To date, Christianity in Malaysia has been cultivating a multiracial Christian community, especially in East Malaysia where the Christian population has grown rapidly in the recent years. In this way Christians help to promote racial harmony and thus, national integration⁹.

It is clear from the above two examples that the mission of Asian Churches operates within diverse societies where problems relating to religious pluralism and poverty cannot be avoided. Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Animism and Hinduism influence and mould the religious beliefs and cultural practices of the great majority of the lives of Asians. The mission of the Churches must re-explore the significance of these religions in the plan of God. Within Asia these religions have changed and determined the course of history, moulded cultures, inspired literature and art, provided hope, or a means of understanding and hence living, in a complex and often fearful world. What are their places within God's salvific history? And in the midst of struggling with the opportunities and complexities of religious pluralism the Churches must not overlook the relevance of the Gospel message to the poverty that permeates so much of Asian society.

GROUP 3

MISSION AND PEOPLE OF DIVERSE FAITHS

1. Asia is the cradle of world religions. From the beginning, Asian people have been living in a pluralistic context with pluralistic religions, including Christianity. The pluralistic context is not a creation of humankind, but is made by God (Genesis 11:1-9). In the pluralistic context, humankind understands deeply the meaning of harmonious life.
2. God calls us to participate in His mission. God's mission in Jesus Christ is to give all people (nations) *shalom* (peace). The presence of Christians in Asia is part of God's mission to people who confess different faiths. Christians have to realize this call in the context in which they live. The calling of God, as written in the Bible, must be understood in a new perspective and must be newly interpreted. Christian churches are called to formulate the new paradigm in the mission task.
3. The paradigm shift of mission should be seen from the goal of mission. Mission is not converting people to be Christians nominally, but to transform life, following the example of Jesus. Baptism is needed by the church, but it is not solely a Christian characteristic. Therefore, exploring the theology of mission must be started. We need to broaden the meaning and goal of mission today, which must be different from the old meaning.
4. In order to reach an understanding of the paradigm shift of mission, every Christian, especially those in the mission field, have to comprehend the history, culture, religion, etc. of their own country. The understanding of their own context is very helpful in doing mission.
5. Regarding the paradigm shift of mission, it is necessary to develop friendship evangelism (human relations). We have to see others from their own standpoint and see their needs as human beings. And we have to love them as God's creation, although we have different faiths. Like Jesus, who loves everyone who needs his help and sees everyone personally, so must we broaden our perspective along this line. Spiritual arrogance must be abandoned.
6. The right perspective will lead us to practicing dialogue. Dialogue should include such aspects as:
 - Dialogue in life. We meet every day with people of other faiths.
 - Dialogue in discourse. We discuss together with people of other faiths our common needs.
 - Dialogue in spirituality. We discuss the general ethics which we need in our society.
 - Dialogue in action. We act together to help people regardless of their religion.

7. With regard to the need of dialogue with people of other faiths, all, who are involved in the mission task, are challenged to share with people of other faiths in their own life context. Living together with people of other faiths is an opportunity for real dialogue. We learn from each other and we can help others to understand us as Christians.

Curriculum

1. The programme for training mission may be divided into two parts:
 - a. Preparation
 - b. Training in seminary
 2. Preparation
All participants (delegates) have to acquainted with issues related to history, culture, religion, etc. of their own countries.
 3. Training in Seminary
The material should focused on the crucial issues in Asia, i.e.
 - the history of Asian churches
 - religions in Asia (Christian faith and other faiths)
 - social issues in Asia
 - mission and globalization
-
- The lectures will be for half days (in the morning). After lunch, all participants will be sent to share and interact in the society.
 - One week of the last period all participants will stay together with the people in the rural areas.
 - The duration of training must be extended to two (2) months.
 - The two seminaries (STS, Kota Kinabalu and Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, India) must be involved in arranging the curriculum.

MISSION RESPONSES TO GLOBALISATION

Lutheran World Federation Seminar on Mission in Asia

Kota Kinabalu, October 2000

Discussion Paper: Brian Michell

As one of the most dramatic and characteristic phenomena of our age, the tidal wave of Globalisation continues to sweep over the world with its vigor, power and impact. Responses vary widely from enthusiastic espousing of its technological advances, communication advantages and economic profits to vigorous protest rejecting its placing of increasing power and wealth in the hands of a decreasing minority, its marginalizing of the disadvantaged or its diminishing of the sense of worth and meaning of individuals and sectional groups.

As those engaged in mission, not only can we not avoid encountering the reality of globalization, we need to respond creatively and responsibly to the opportunities and challenges it presents to the global enterprise of mission.

Our view of the character and function of mission will determine the range of our responses, but if we are to engage in mission in the new millennium, we will need to clarify and implement a realistic commitment to working within the global framework of the modern world.

A holistic view of mission such as that summarized by Andrew Kirk would face us with a wide spectrum of issues. He highlights five significant characteristics of mission as:

1. Stewarding the resources of CREATION.
2. Serving HUMAN BEINGS in all circumstances.
3. Bearing witness to TRUTH.
4. Engaging in seeing God's JUSTICE done in society.
5. Showing what it means to be a RECONCILED AND LIBERATED COMMUNITY in a despairing world.¹

On a basis such as this, we can then consider a number of important areas of mission response to globalization which would benefit from our attention as we seek to relate our responsibilities in mission to the challenges and opportunities of the twentyfirst century.

These include the following areas along with the subsidiary factors, implications and challenges:

¹ Andrew Kirk, "Missiology" in SB Ferguson & DF Wright (eds) New Dictionary of Theology, Leicester, IVP, 1988, pp 434-436.

1. Content and Context

- a) Theological issues: eg the context of religious pluralism, the nature of the inter-religious encounter, tolerance, respect, conviction, evangelism and questions of the imposition of our beliefs on others, the polarity of accommodation or confrontation, dialogue with those of other religions.
- b) Contextualization: sensitivity, understanding, identification and reception in the local cultural context; the development of a mature 'self-theologizing' church, the forces of deracination in globalisation.
- c) Persecution and suffering: cause and response, impact on personal, church and national life.
- d) The charismatic movement: theological, contextual and methodological impact and implications.

2. Tasks and Methodology

- a) Proclamation: the establishment of indigenous/contextualised churches.
- b) Service: holistic ministry, a full spectrum of social action.
- c) Advocacy for justice: prophetic voice, costly commitment, support and/or challenge.
- d) Reaching the least evangelized: the 10/40 Window, Creative Access Nations, Unreached People Groups adoption, the post-Christian West.
- e) Urban centers: the growing megacities, needs and opportunities.
- f) Types of approach: career, short-term, secular professionals/tentmakers, non-residential/strategic advisors.
- g) Spiritual factors: intercession, prayer walking, 'signs and wonders'.

3. Service and Advocacy

- a) Assisting the disadvantaged: in poverty, injustice, inequality, powerlessness, meaninglessness, loss of self-worth; full and meaningful employment for all who are able to work.
- b) Support for victims of violence and disaster.
- c) Care for those with HIV-related illnesses and other major medical and social needs.
- d) Action in the face of political misuse of power and the use of race or religion for political purposes.
- e) Advocacy and action over gender issues, disintegration of the family, population explosion, abuse of the environment.

4. Personnel Selection, Training, Guidance and Care

- a) Criteria and implementation of selection and care processes: suitability, preparation, guidance and supervision, care and support, re-entry, attrition.
- b) Expectations of character, general and spiritual maturity.
- c) Programs of training, academic, spiritual and practical formation, Bible knowledge, ministry experience and evaluation.
- d) Age criteria and use of 'finishers'/early retirees.
- e) Cross-cultural sensitivity and avoidance of ethnocentrism and pride.

5. Ecumenicity and Partnership

- a) Cooperation across the churches.
- b) Partnership between sending churches, church and/or mission agencies, emerging and established churches: expectations, criteria, operation, trust, accountability and evaluation in partnerships.
- c) Unity with diversity in international teams.
- d) Two-Thirds World missions: special issues which arise – finance, cross-cultural adaptation, length of service, Third-Culture Kids' (MKs) education and welfare, responsibility for other family members, retirement security, communication and confidentiality, structures, decision-making processes, authority and accountability.
- e) Partnership of the emerging churches: locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- f) Imparting ongoing vision for mission in the resultant churches.

6. Technology and Resources

- a) Communication resources, methods and consequences.
- b) Travel convenience and economy: opportunities and consequences.
- c) Information Technology: benefits, expectations, demands and results.

7. Operational Economics and their Implications

- a) Increasing costs: particularly of expatriate and especially Western personnel.
- b) Support and dependency: wise and unwise use of money to facilitate or hinder service and autonomous development.
- c) Cultural differences, integrity and accountability issues.

Our handling of issues such as these will not only directly affect the conduct and results of the church's mission in the context of increasing globalization, but also shape the very character of the church in the new millennium and the way in which it in turn responds to the challenges and opportunities it will face in the future.

GROUP 4

MISSION RESPONSES TO GLOBALISATION

I. COURSE PURPOSES

1. To propose a training course in mission responses to globalisation.
2. The purpose of this course: to equip trainees to train people back in their churches or regions to undertake mission effectively in the global context.

II. THE CONTENT OF THE COURSE

1. The definition and the process of globalisation; its implication for mission.
2. The identification of the resources which are available for mission.
3. The impact of globalisation are:
 - a. positive impact – communication, travel, information, networking, economy, expectations and demands.
 - b. negative impact – marginalizing of minorities, increasing disparity of the poor and the rich, unemployment, migrant workers, violence and discrimination (e.g. social class, caste, gender, race, religion).
4. Cross cultural sensitivity and relationships.
5. Actions
 - a. Proclamation – life and hope.
 - b. Service – education, drugs and HIV prevention and care, prostitution.
 - c. Advocacy for justice – victims of poverty, discrimination, violence, people disadvantaged by urbanisation, environmental issues.
6. Work in partnership with other churches and agencies.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Teaching and interactions, case studies and observation, seminars.
2. Primary language medium of instructions is English, but if it is possible the Bahasa could be applied to STS and Indian language to Gurukul.

IV. EVALUATION

By preparation of individual's project writing.

GROUP 5

Discussion Starter: Mission and the Church (Rev. Josephine Tso)

In thinking of the topic “Mission and the Church”, I was delighted to be reminded and struck by the Findings of the LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission at Nairobi, Kenya, October 1998. In the section on Theological Study on Mission, we are reminded that Mission of God cannot be simply equated with the mission of the church, that theology is indispensable and necessary for strengthening the mission understanding and practice of the church, and that existing church structures influence the manner in which the church community undertakes mission.

I find these points decisive because both, partnerships in mission and approaches to mission, are under their influence. While “transformation” is viewed as mission imperative in the theology of mission, I somehow find repentance more applicable and powerful, especially for church leaders. By repentance I recall the first of Martin Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses 1517* which is of utmost importance not only for the entire Lutheran movement, but also for the reformation of the whole church. Repentance is more than a change of heart or mind. It is indeed a transformation of the whole person, which may result in reformation of the church on a wider and corporate scale. History has attested how individuals’ repentance bring forth reformation in the church. But once Christians refuse to repent daily, the church’s reformation is to be retarded as we have also seen in history.

For your comments, my thinking, moving into the direction of repentance, is as follows:

First, if “mission as proclamation is an attempt by every Christian to tell and interpret the gospel story in his/her context as a way to discover God’s saving action and meaningful presence in the world”, what is the role of the pastors and of the institutional church in serving our fellow Christians? Are our pastors quantitatively sufficient and qualitatively competent in responding to this need? What can and should the institutional church do in order to enable its servants in mission? If the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one thing that only His Church can tell, how is this Gospel understood by the Christians and proclaimed to the public? What is the church’s role in theological education or re-education and reflection which may result in intensive and extensive faithful witness and evangelism?

Second, if “mission as service highlights the diaconal dimension of a faith active in love, working for the empowerment and liberation of those in need,” are we Christians sensitive enough to the needs of our fellow neighbors. The chief administrator of Hong Kong, Mr. Tung Chi-wah, is said to have a mind for reform in the post-colonial city, the Special Administrative Region of China, aiming at up-bringing Hong Kong as an international metropolitan of the 21st century. But he is also criticized and complained as not being sensitive enough to the present needs of the people. What are the real needs of our people? Is what they perceive their want now, their real need? Or is what they fail to perceive their want in the near future, their real need? Or both? What is the unique thing only the church can

provide for its neighbor? The bread for living or the bread of life or both? How can the needy and the poor be fed with both the bread for living and the bread for life? What is the church's role in this feeding of the people?

Third, if "mission as advocacy for justice denotes the church's praxis in the public arena as affirmation and reaffirmation of the dignity of human life, both as individual and as community, as well as a widened sense of justice, encompassing the economic, social and ecological spheres," are we qualified as such an advocate? Do we need to learn from the secular world for wisdom concerning our effective and efficient advocacy? Is restructuring ourselves necessary for the well-being of the wider community which our churches belong and serve? In our own city, do we need a courageous merger so as to consolidate ourselves, our resources and our strengths, for our advocacy to be heard both effectively and efficiently. Does such a courageous move benefit either our feeding of the needy and the poor or our proclaiming of the Gospel, or both? We all know that while diversity is a blessing from the Triune God, division hurts the Holy Spirit. What then shall we do to be like God?

The above is, of course, a contextual theological reflection of mine, presented to you first and foremost as an expression of an own repenting movement. But I pray that this may also stimulate our further discussions and theologizing during or after this seminar. Your comments are always welcome. Thank you.

GROUP 5
MISSION AND THE CHURCH

Participants : Ms. Wannee Kemtong
Ms. Ritva Halmesmaa
Rev. Dr. Kim Chul-Hwan
Mr. Lim Chin Teck
Rev. Ginda P. Harahap
Rev. A.G. Augustine Jeyakumar – Chairperson
Rev. Tso Josephine – Presenter / Secretary
Rev. Tsen Lip-Tet, Thomas – Secretary

I. PRESENTATION
II. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR
III. DISCUSSION

A. Mission and the Church

- New understanding of mission from the LWF perspectives. Proclamation, service, advocacy, nurture, dialogue and care for creation.
- Role of the pastor and planning on training programmes on mission.

B. Mission and Congregation

- Congregation to be well informed about the role of mission. Pastor and the trained missionary to be facilitators.
- The training should be given at congregational level, groups level, etc.
- Missionaries can be lay leaders, youth.
- The congregation should carry out the mission in a way acceptable by the whole church, otherwise it will cause conflicts and divisions which is harmful for mission.
- Good relationships from the pastor and the congregation is necessary.
- Church should invite every congregation and congregation should invite every member to do the mission.

C. Mission and Theological Education

- Pastor should be trained to motivate congregation to do mission. The preaching and practice of the pastor should be related to the congregation. Witnessing life is more important.
- Seminary should give more opportunities for the spiritual development of the pastor/missionary.
- Pastor/missionary should stimulate the spirituality of the congregation.
- Theological education can be informal and non formal (equally theoretical and practical).

D. Mission and Worship

- Sunday worship should be inviting for non-members and people of other faiths. New comers should be invited and treated well.
- Liturgy and music should be indigenised, easy to understand, more openings to young people.

- Liturgy should be mission oriented (instead of missionary field background oriented) relates to the local context and the life and witness of the local congregation, so that the worshippers understand the worship meaningfully, understand the presence of God, his forgiveness, his love and his care.
- Training and liturgy preparation is important and involvement of lay leaders should be encouraged.

E. Holistic Mission of the Church

- Identifying the need of the community in worship, nurture, evangelism and development.
- The involvement of the church should be multi-dimensional to cater the needs at local congregation and community level.
- Diakonia work could be an entry point for introducing our commitment and call for the mission.

F. The group also discussed on the 4 documents presented during the beginning of the sessions and has taken the insights for discussion and planning the proposed curriculum.

- Gender balance, teaching and preaching ministry, testimonies, stewardship and the structure of the church were also discussed to get the insights.
- Proposal for a recommendation from this seminar to the LWF – to communicate the concern to the UN to initiate a new “Religion Law” along with WCC may be taken into consideration.

IV. MISSIONARY TRAINING PROPOSAL (Process of Training)

- i. Preparatory Period
- ii. Training Period
- iii. Follow-Up Period

i. Preparatory Period

On the invitation from the LWF, the churches should select the candidates:

- * Pastor, lay leaders, youth
- * English knowledge - those who have only mission commitment experience may be selected and given language training and be sent to STS, Sabah
 - otherwise the person with English knowledge may be sent to the first batch to Gurukul, India.
- * Gender balance be maintained
- * The LWF can invite applications from the churches with bio data of the candidates and inform the selected batches to the churches.
- * Preparation of local church mission history. Share copies to the LWF and to SEMINARY.
- * Preparations of details on local context, issues, challenges, etc.

ii. Training Period

Subject

- * Text for mission
- * Context for mission
- * History of the mission (individual churches in Asia)
- * Local context of the mission field

- * Spirituality (personal life, devotion, preaching and missionary context)
- * Preaching with testimony
- * Worship and liturgy
- * Leadership (nurture, Christian education, confirmation) – smaller groups
- * Holistic
- * Communion of churches (relationships, co-operations, fellowship, friendship) Globally, nationally, and local church - sharing
- * Local congregation – strength and weakness, resource and need (worship, nurture, proclamation and development)
- * Gender balance / issues
- * Field exposures

iii. **Follow-up Period**

- * Replacement of the trainer
- * Training local groups
- * Follow-up reports (after 6 months) to church, seminary, the LWF.
- * Identifying new areas for programmes for mission

CURRICULUM FOR TRAINING IN MISSION
PROPOSAL BY ACTEAS

Church And Mission

GROUP 5

Observations & Comments

The papers, proposals presented by ACTEAS for mission training were very much welcomed and appreciate the hard work of ARTEAS. The following comments and suggestions were presented:

1. **The planning is more academic**
- two weeks theory and two weeks practical oriented programmes may be planned.
2. **The planned programmes seem to be too heavy**
- the evening session may be in the form of family groups, sharing.
3. **The presentation of own history by participant**
- this may be brought in at the beginning of the course in order to facilitate the Professor and the fellow trainees to know about their mission history.
4. **the History of mission – global context**
- the history may be limited to Asian context to save time.
5. **The dialogue**
- the methodology and the new dialogue models may be taught to the trainees (since the training period is limited).
6. **Congregational exposure (missing)**
- the Sundays can be used for worship with other congregation and interaction with families after the worship service is over till the evening.
7. **Evaluation**
- the evaluation may be done by participatory and also with prepared questionnaires on teaching, course, presentation etc.
8. **Duration – one month**
- the group felt that such a valuable, useful course is limited by one month. If it is for at least two to three months, it would be helpful to the trainees.

MISSION AND THE HEALING MINISTRY AND SERVICE

Dr. Edison Munthe

INTRODUCTION

I am so thankful to God for being able to be with you all here, to share our mission in the world. I am also thankful to the LWF Asia Desk which invited me to this seminar. I do hope that our meeting here can nourish us together to experience God's grace and His mission in this world. This experience can also unite us in our mission today and to renew our commitment to bring the Good News in His name.

OUR PRESENT WORLD

I believe that this world is given to us by God and He also wants us to care for all of His creation in order to bring it to His fullness of grace. However, the facts show us that the world which has been given to us has been torn into pieces. People suffer due to many reasons. Crimes exist in all parts of the world. Thousands of people suffer from AIDS/HIV (an African friend told me that nearly half of the Africans have been infected by AIDS/HIV, including their children). Discrimination and violation of women is still a painful reality. We heard stories of how women and churches have worked to put an end to violence against women. Economic crisis is still experienced by many countries in the world. Xenophobia affects people in Germany. And there are many bad things in the world still going on and on. These experiences dehumanised people of this world. We are especially concerned about the growing insecurity and human rights violations in several parts of Indonesia, the ongoing war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the unresolved conflicts in Sri Lanka and the Philippines. There is poverty in India as well as in other parts of the world. People are crying and asking why all the misery happens. It seems there is no hope at all to overcome all these things which dehumanise human beings. What shall we do now as people of God?

THE CALL FOR MINISTRY

As a communion of churches we reaffirm our commitment to fully participate in God's mission by witnessing to the Reign of God, spreading the Good News and serving all people in needs. In this way we revitalise our confession to the God of hope. We profess the crucified Jesus Christ as the hope of creation and keep engaged in mission as heralds and bearers of this hope. We are encouraging and urging the member churches to light the candle of hope in the darkness. We are aware that many member churches are experiencing difficult situations in their respective countries. We have many reasons to engage ourselves in God's mission. He calls us to His mission. The mission in which we are engaged is the mission which Jesus engaged in, to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save His people (Luke 4, 18-19).

RECRUITMENT

God calls us as He called upon Isaiah by asking: "Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?" As Isaiah answered: "I will go! Send me!", so do we answer Him, the God of our hope (Isa. 6,8). God purifies us in order to do His mission. As Jesus renewed Simon Peter in order to shepherd His sheep, so we are renewed by His gracious love in order to care for His people in this world (John 21,15-17). Jesus recruited His disciples to continue His works, so does the church nowadays have to call the believers to bear His mission. Who is willing to proclaim the Good News to the poor? To proclaim the liberty to the captives? To recover the sight of the blind? To set free the oppressed? To bring healing to the wounded? We are the believers called to engage in His ministry. The task is now put upon our shoulders. This task

is in and out-reaching. It is because all people is God's people. Ministry is doing God's speaking, choosing, comforting, supporting, electing and healing. It is a function.

EQUIPPING

Those who are called by God to do His mission, do not work according to their will and their strength. They have to work according to God's will and for the glory of the God whom they Serve. One way of helping people is through the ministry of pastoral care. Pastoral ministry is inseparable from human life. It is a vocation and mission. It is a call and answer of the word of God to support, comfort and to strengthen those who live with burdens. It is the ministry to represent Christ and His church in this world. Also, it is the ministry of healing. Pastoral care is the work of the whole church, not just the ordained pastors. All are called to promote healing, nurturing, and preservation of life. These are not rules to be followed to become good, but rather ways of responding to our salvation. They can promote healing through their responsibilities if they are willing to, because they are already chosen by God for that purpose. They are not under rule and principles, but under grace. One of the biblical texts which is related to the church's work of equipping its members is Eph. 4, 11-16: "The gifts He gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."

There are two important issues that surface out of this text. They are: the source of the gifts, and the purpose of giving the given gifts. All of those, who are called, are the messengers of Jesus to minister to God's people in every setting they are responsible for. These groups must be equipped by the Gospel for carrying out Christ's ministry. Skill, methods and professionalism must be assumed only as tools, not the source of ministry. They cannot and should not replace the word of God.

Seminar on Mission in Asia
25-30 October, 2000
Sabah Theological College, Kota Kinabalu
Malaysia

GROUP REPORT 6

MISSION AND HEALING MINISTRY

I. PRESENTATION

The Presenter Dr. Edison Munthe in his presentation explained that in the present day context the world is torn into pieces where we notice crime, Discrimination against women, economic crisis, poverty, conflicts and war, AIDS and many others. In the midst of this context the church is called for ministry, to witness and to participate in the Mission of God. He emphasized that the mission in which we are engaged is the mission in which Jesus was engaged in – to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and to announce that the time has come when the Lord will save His people (Luke 4: 18-19). The task of participating in the mission of God is on every believer, because God has recruited us for this task. Here Dr. Munthe stressed that Ministry is doing God's speaking, choosing, comforting, supporting, electing and healing. It is a function. To engage in this mission of God people need to be equipped. All the members of the church should be equipped in pastoral care. Pastoral Ministry is inseparable from human life. This is where the people receive support, comfort and strength. And it is the Ministry of Healing.

II. DISCUSSION

The group felt that this could be discussed under three headings:

The Context
The Models
Ministry

The Context:

The group identified under broad heading **broken relationship** as the main area which needs healing ministry. Broken relationships could be seen in three different areas:

1. Spiritual
2. Physical
3. Social

- There is need for spiritual healing – this is done through Bible studies, seminars, workshops etc. Another area that attracted our attention was the Religious Pluralistic Context. In what way we understand spiritual healing in relation to our neighbours, who are people of other faiths? Dialogue? How do we understand Dialogue process?
- There is a need for physical healing. Along with professional care and treatment, the visitation and prayers bring also physical healing.
- There is a need for social healing – This is the area which needs equal concentration because the issues like poverty, discrimination,

marginalisation, and other issues divide people and thus brake the relationship. There is a need to address the causes for such a situation which contribute to broken relationships. We need to identify the systems, structures, models and other things we follow in our community and society. It was also identified that the Human Rights issue is Justice issue. Human Rights is a God given Gift. It is sacred. Violation of Human Rights is misusing the gift of God. Violation of Human rights is a result of corrupt practices among the leaders who ought to protect the Human Rights, Greed of people and exploitative structures and systems in the society. While discussing about Human Rights, it was pointed out that it was pointed out that the church as an institution is violating the Human Rights issue in the sense that its pastors and other workers had to spend more time than one can work as an individual. The worst affected people are the lower rank workers in the hierarchy. If such is the case

- How can the church involve herself to fight for Human Rights of the Others?

The second area is the relationship between the National Churches and the Partner Churches. Very often we notice that the partner churches set the agenda for the National Churches. If the national Churches do not accept this they do not get funds. The priorities of the partner churches should be respected. This is a fact even though hard to accept.

- Is it not a violation of the Rights of the National Churches? How can we as a national Church in the Human Rights Issues?

There is a need for the church (the structures and hierarchy) and her believers to be healed first. Then only we can be instruments of healing. Without this we are hypocrites.

Another area that came up in our discussion is Christian Participation in Human Rights Struggle. Should Christians Participate and how far is it spiritually, morally and ethically right? What methods should be used – Violent? Non-violent? With whom to identify? Only Christians? NGOs? Others?

The Group felt that participation in Human Rights Movements and Struggles depend much upon the understanding of *missio dei*. And this gives an answer to the question of our participation in the Human Rights Struggles.

The Models

The Models we can draw from the life and ministry of Jesus.

- Dialogue with the Samaritan Woman, Zecheaus, and others.
- Questioning the people in power and authority regarding the oppressive systems and structures.
- Bringing both spiritual and physical healing to the people.
- Jesus to seen as king, prophet and priest.

The Ministry:

As we are engaged together with God in His Mission, there is a need to concentrate on the following:

- Emphasis on Pastoral Care and Counselling. It is not the duty of the pastor alone, but the responsibility of the whole congregation. But special training in skills, techniques, and methods is essential. This should be part of training Programme.
- Likewise also in Dialogue. How to be engaged in dialogue, the methods, techniques, and skills should be taught to the trainees. A better view of other religions and their traditions will help people in dialogue process.
- The members of the congregation should be a healed community to engage themselves in the healing ministry.
- The Ministry of a king is to protect the people from all violations, the ministry of a prophet is to rise voice where there is injustice and violation of Human Rights, and the ministry of a priest is bring reconciliation between God and Humans, among the Humans and between the Humans and the Created Order.

The Group recommends also the following:

- Since Pastoral Care is an important element in healing Ministry and the Ministry of Church as a Whole, it should have special importance in the curriculum.
- To prepare texts for all the courses in the curriculum so that the same may be translated and used at national and local levels.
- Request the LWF to organise a “Pastors and Evangelists Refresher’s Course” in Pastoral Care and Counselling at regional level.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Religious Freedom is the fundamental right of an individual. This should be protected and where violated should be opposed.
2. A clearer understanding of Creation theology is needed in relation to Human Rights Violation.
3. Should the church be treated together with many other things in the world or should addressed separately.
4. Under “Mission and Healing Ministry”, in addition to social, economic, political structures, religious customs and practices that promote oppression, importance should be given to Spiritual Aspect.

COMMUNICATION, CULTURE AND MISSION

New answers for old questions

The theme I would like to address on this occasion is "COMMUNICATION, CULTURE AND MISSION: new answers for old questions." As we have entered into a new millenium, visualized to be an era of information and communication, what are the challenges of the mission of God in the ensuing new age? We shall see this question from the standpoint of reevaluating the meaning of Mission, which is an old question, recurring from the time of the early church. The urgent task of the church in this age is, how this mission could be accomplished in the context of new Information and Communication age. From our perspective let us first understand the term, 'communication' from the broader perspective before we enter into discussions on 'media'. Discussion on 'media' focuses on media as a tool, which focuses on the instrumentalist function of the media. Discussion on 'communication' would enable us go deeper into the subject and understand that communication because communication is not limited to the instrumentalist function but a broader meaning of 'communion' which concerned with building a community. As Christian communicators, we are entrusted with this task of the mission to establish communion to build community the very purpose of the mission of God to reestablish the broken relationship between God and human beings. This is the purpose of God's communication.

Christianity – a Religion of Communication and Mission

Christianity is pre-eminently a religion of communication, establishing the central emphasis on a divine self-communication – the incarnation – and continually re-incarnating the Word which become flesh to live among people, through its communicative symbols and experiences in different cultures. The church has the mandate to proclaim the "Word" and to form "ecclesial communities" that are constituted by shared communication among the people of God. If the centrality of the Christian mission is zealous with proclamation of the good news to the people, then, there is no ministry without communication.

Proclamation or communication of the good news is the mandate given by Christ to his disciples before his ascension, as he commanded them saying, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk.16:15). The mission of the church is to be the bearer of God's message of love and healing. As Avery Dulles observes, "Communication is at the heart of what the Church is all about. The Church exists to bring men (and women) into communion with each other." (Avery Dulles, 1991:69) The church, as a community lives for the sake of the world and not for her own sake. She is called to be a witness to the prophetic consciousness. Communication of this message of divine power and healing is the mission for which the Church lives.

Hendrik Kraemer observes that, communication of the message is the crowning category of which all activities of the church in evangelising, preaching, teaching, and witnessing to all fields of life are part. (Kraemer, H., 1957). Hence, communication is an unending task that must constantly be restarted. This uninterrupted communication

of the Christian message is what we presently call the missionary or apostolic obligation or mission of the Church. Hence communication of the Gospel is not a reason for glorification, but a divine command placed upon the Church. The church is created in order to communicate. Therefore, the church has no choice whether she will or not communicate. It is a mandate given to the church and every Christian to go and preach the good news that will enable people to be fully human, as God intended them to be.

To be human is to communicate: Communication touches upon all that we are and all that we do, hence, we cannot help but communicate. Communication is an elemental necessity that constitutes our inter-subjectivity. Through communication one becomes a full human and cultural being. Culture depends on the common sharing and participation by the members of a community. One generation communicates to another, sets of ideas, values, moral norms, and behavioral patterns that result in a particular cultural context. No community can be established or continue to live without communication. Bernard Lonergan writes that, "community constitutes and perfects itself through communication" (Bernard J. F. Lonergan, 1972:363).

What is communication?

It is not easy to define communication, since it is a complex reality. The word communication comes from the Latin word '*communicare*' which has several meanings: to make common, to share, to transmit, to inform, to unite, to impart, etc. Hence, in its broadest sense, communication means sharing, interacting, participating, conversing, and exchanging information. More precisely, communication can be defined as that dynamic and reciprocal process by which people, individually or collectively, share messages of meaning and value with one another. Communication, is interchange of information, in the way we share ideas, feelings, experiences, attitudes and values with others.

Communication is not just an objective; unchanging process but depends very much on the normative conception of the good society and how communication contributes to different normatively defined societal worldviews. For example, if one starts with a corporatist conception of society in which a single set of values and worldview are to be the basis of an integrated culture and organic society, there is likely to be acceptance of much more 'authoritarian' set of presuppositions about good communication than in a liberal, market-oriented society in which the ideal is to open up communications to many different sets of values and world-views competing for acceptance.

The five normative traditions, each with its particular conceptions of communication and its theories for guiding research and practice, generally describe a society-wide set of preferred communication institutions, often developed through socio-political movements that have proposed a transformation of communication structures as part of a general transformation of the society. Often what is proposed is a change in the set of values and worldview governing communication so that it aims to transform the patterns of communication from the international level to the most intimate interpersonal and intra-personal communication.

Soukup (1986)), identifies six dominant metaphors of communication used by theologians: language systems, subjective artistic expression, interpretational dialogue, transport of information, cultural consensus or theological conclusions about the influence of the transcendent in human communication. Even if one takes a rather generic, consensual definition of communication such as “the sharing of meaning”, this definition has different interpretations depending on the presuppositions of the metaphor.

St. Thomas Aquinas often used the word, *communicatio* for *communio* and *communitas*. He considered that communion or community is not possible without communication, since, to some extent, communion is the result of communication. Communication covers a broad spectrum. There is, for example, a great difference in intensity, quality, and duration between the casual communication of strangers and the intimate communication of friends. Yet, wherever there is communication, some kind of communion is also established, however narrow and short-lived or cruel and exploitative it may be. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler make this point clear by saying that, “Communication designates that active exchange, based on personal ability to hear and on free openness, creates a community between the transmitter (sender) and the recipient (hearer) which is best called communion.” (Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, 1965:89).

James Carey points out that, communication could best be described as a transmission, as a ritual and as communion because,

“... it is a process through which a shared culture is created, modified and transformed ... A ritual view of communication is not directed toward the extension of messages in space, but the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information or influence, but the creation, representation, and celebration of shared beliefs. If a transmission view of communication centers on the extension of messages across geography for purposes of control, a ritual view centers on the sacred ceremony which draws persons together in fellowship and community.” (James W. Carey, 1977: 412)

Katz and Dayan have shown that, the high points of mass media are the coronations, competitions, and funerals, all moments of ritual setting aside daily affairs to explore the broader meaning of life. (Katz and Dayan, 1985)

Hence, communication, as a transmission and as a ritual, is central to Christianity in fulfilling the mission mandate. It is this view; I would like to stress in this paper as we discuss the issues of communication and mission – an old issue in the new context.

What is mission?

Ecclesiology – the theology of the Church – is fundamental in understanding the mission because it is that discourse which studies the nature and mission of the Church. Ecclesiology is an attempt to understand and to communicate the mystery of the church. A variation in ecclesiologies found both in the New Testament and in the history of Christianity is inadequate to express the fullness of the Church. Yet in every ecclesiology, communication is a critical element. No ecclesiology is effective if it cannot be communicated or if it does not sufficiently respond to the variety of contexts and experiences in which the local churches function. The Church is a socio-cultural

reality that is always found in a particular time and space. A balanced ecclesiology recognizes the multidimensional character of the church. However, to focus solely on the human and social aspects of the Church is to reduce the Church to just another social group. To focus solely on the divine and spiritual qualities of the church is to exaggerate its supernatural aspects and overlook the crucial fact that its members are human beings living in the world. The church is a human society, *albeit* unique because of its divine foundation, guidance, and goal.

Gathering and sending-forth are the two-fold mission mandate of the church. Firstly, the Church is a *gathering* of persons into community membership. Most often within a congregational context, the church preaches and teaches the Word, celebrates the sacraments, and assists the needy. Secondly, the Church *sends-forth* its message to the unevangelised, to the poor, and to all who seek the enduring truth and meaning in their lives. Communication is pivotal in both these aspects of mission.

The church has the duty to communicate the core message of Christianity – the life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus – to the world. Evangelization, an act of mission is communicating the word of God. It is not an abstract exercise. “To communicate the Christian message, is to lead another to share in one’s cognitive, constitutive, effective meaning”, says Bernard Lonergan (1972:362). In the words of Newbegin, evangelism is ‘one beggar showing to another beggar where food is available.’ In letter to the Romans, Paul says that, “Faith comes from hearing,” (Rom.10: 17). The communication of the faith takes several forms: the witness of an authentic Christian life, preaching, catechetics, the sacraments, and the utilization of the mass media. We need to seek more suitable ways to communicate the faith to our contemporaries. To make the faith more credible, captivating, and believable, we need to develop meaningful and convincing language, symbols and images. The encyclical, ‘*Lumen gentium*’ rightly points out that, the Church of Christ is “a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of all humankind” (*Lumen gentium* 1)

Evangelisation as Communication

The work of evangelisation is a basic duty of the people of God. All Christians are called to witness, and in this way we can be real evangelisers. No follower of Christ is exempt from this responsibility. Those who want to be active communicators of the gospel must be good listeners. If a church is not a teaching, learning, and listening Church, is not on the wavelength of divine communication. *Communio et progressio*, (1971) points out that, the information must not only go out from our proclamation efforts but must flow back in such a way that we, the evangelisers, also learn and are transformed. In reflecting on this idea Bernard Haring believes that the Church can be a prophetic voice if she is willing to listen and to share in the joys and hopes, the anguish and fears of all people. (Bernard Haring, 1972:38) He reminds us that communication in the church and through the Church is for the sake of community, for the unity among humankind. But communication or evangelisation does not automatically bring about community. There is need for dialogue, for conversation, for being with others and for each other.

New and urgent questions face the church as it seeks to communicate the gospel in contemporary culture. Today we step onto a new landscape filled with new technologies and mass media attractions, only to find the people speaking a new

language or have differing cultural experiences. They may no longer hear voices of religious tradition, or they may simply refuse to even listen.

If communication is the heart of the Church's life, then the evangelizer must enter in a decisive way into this new age. Being faithful to the gospel, we face the challenge of this new culture before us. We are called to explore new ways for opening up dialogue with the people of the other culture, language, religion, etc., presenting the message to them as honestly and authentically as we can, allowing them the absolute right to reject or to accept it. If they accept it, they must be free to understand it and express it in the midst of their culture. And as evangelizers we must be sensitive enough to hear what they play back to us, to see if it does not give us an even clearer vision and more refined view of that "uncovered Gospel."

Christian Witness as Communication

The world is experiencing a transition toward a new way of getting information, of communicating with one another, and consequently of being and existing as human persons. Joshua Mevrowitz (1985) observed that, communication now is not simply a vehicle for the transmission of a culture that already exists, but it is becoming one of the elements that control a new culture. The church has sought to 'inculturate' the Gospel, to transmit it and to embody it in the culture. Now that the church feels itself to be truly universal, it is also encouraging a universal culture, one that is controlled by the communication media. In contrast to the former processes of inculturation, the new challenges do not come from geographical frontiers or define cultural traditions. The new challenge is that of a culture which is universal, unified and strongly moulded by the modern communication media. The inculturation of the Gospel in this new cultural process that is influenced by the media demands a deep awareness of the implications both of the instruments or means and of the ways in which the message is communicated. All this means significant changes in the very life of the church.

The importance of this problem derives from the characteristics of the modern world, from its complexities and its seeking, from its potentialities and its sense of technological progress, and above all from the need for evangelization as the fundamental mission of the church. In a way, the media challenge us to regain the fundamental importance of witness as Christian communication. The communication media challenge can awaken a better understanding of mission itself. It is not a matter of a mere strategic accommodation or of a pastoral use of certain instruments; it is a matter of rethinking theologically the paths of a communication of the Gospel values. Christian witness is not just an appropriate response on the level of the challenge of the media, but also a recovery of the importance of witness in communicating the Gospel.

By 'witness' we mean the presence of a person or a community that lives the message of the gospel profoundly and through this life communicates the good news to others. It is a matter of communication through life. Furthermore, there is particular emphasis on the ecclesial community as the area in which these values grow, even though individuals manifest them. Both aspects, the individual one of personal integrity and the community one as the area where these values develop and grow strong, are important for ecclesial communication, which is no mere school of exemplary persons but a living community established around a totality of relationships.

We shall try to see that there is something intrinsically theological about witness, as communication and no mere sociological and cultural need demanded by the communications media.

Theological need for witness as a form of communication

God's communication to humanity came through the personal and collective witness of prophets and a chosen people. Isolated words without the context of actions would be insufficient, because many of the words that reveal God are precisely interpretations of salvation events. God placed people and living communities as an incarnation of his message, of his plans, of his will, communicating himself precisely through the way that these people and communities were transformed by faith. The letter to the Hebrews begins by relating: In times past God spoke in fragmented and varied ways to our fathers ... (Heb.1:1)

To speak of witness as a form of Christian communication is not just a short-lived response to the cultural and technological phenomenon of modern communications but a profound Christian need. The cultural situation does no more than highlight a form of communication that has never been lost, but that must today take a special place in the communication of the faith. Witness as a privileged means of communication merges with two current theological themes: that of *the following of Christ* and that of *the Church as a community of disciples*. Christ and his message are not understood except by entering into the process of 'following him' and hence, of receiving the witness of the community and in turn of giving it to others. (Jon Sobrino, 1978)

Although the media in themselves are limited to offering witness just as it is presented, the cultural context becomes a part of the witness when lives are consistent with the message. Hence the witnesses to gospel values do not just proclaim them in visual communication but live them beyond the lights and cameras of broadcasting. Overall context, personal and collective history, ensure the genuineness of the witnessing message.

Christian witness by definition is not that of isolated individuals but of the community. The relationship of personal witness to the community that nurture these values is fundamental to recognising the meaning of Christianity and of the 'community of the disciples.' Christian life, because it is a participation in the grace of God and because God is the mystery of the interpersonal communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, consists fundamentally in a profound relationship of the personal with the communitarian. It is not mere presence in a group that ensures depth of faith and of conversion, but the latter is in turn oriented toward the community. The baptism that pardons and purifies the person is at the same time the sign of incorporation into the community.

Innovations in Communication and their Challenges for Mission

Communication, above all in the visual media, is changing our way of understanding reality and of understanding our very selves, points out Soukup (Paul A. Soukup, 1986). Communication is the fundamental path of the 'socialization' of people in social groups, in the family, society and nation. Children and young people enter into the adult world through the path of a communication of 'learning.' For centuries this communication was verbal, in words, whether oral or written. Today one has to ask what proportion of learning the children of this generation owe to

formal education, the traditional mode of communication, and how much to informal education through the frequent use of the communication media, above all of television. An attempt to incorporate informal methods into formal education is not sufficient for educational purposes; it is necessary rather to recognize the other sources of knowledge, one that is not controllable in specific school programs but which is nevertheless a genuine path of learning. (William Fore, 1987)

Modern communications affect not only the way we learn but also the way we live. We live in accordance with what we have learned. In that sense the content of what was communicated is important. However, in contrast with other media of communication, where the important element was the content of what was presented, with the media something new has come into being. For the media offer not just the possibility of giving content, but in addition they constitute intrinsically a new method of communication and hence a new way of perceiving human reality, of making it known, and therefore of shaping this reality. In the final analysis, it is a different way of living and of being persons.

Within this new situation there are evident ambiguities. Visual communication can have negative influences on people's reflexes, on their capacity for absorption and for recognition of the whole. Communication pulls us toward a level of passing fashions, of superficial attitudes, of conventional stereotypes. The bombardment of a consumer society designs our attitudes and distorts our needs; we are programmed 'to need what is produced', instead of orienting the economy 'to produce what is needed.' Again, because of the very nature of the communications media, messages that cannot be expressed through these channels, but which may be important for the development of the person, get filtered out. Modern communication if not used critically, can involve a loss of values and of potential for human development.

Although, the arrival of new communication and information technologies has offered the promise of more egalitarian, participatory, and progressive structures, in practice, the reality has been of their rapid incorporation into familiar structures of inequality and commercial exploitation. The Internet repeats this picture only too clearly. By 1994 not a single Less Developed Countries (LCD) had a computer network directly connected to the Internet. Packet switched data networks existed in only five L D Cs. The Internet Society estimate that in 1994 there were 0.002 Internet users per 1,000 inhabitants in India compared to 48.9 in Sweden. Most African nations still have no Internet access, yet the possible uses for such networks, for example in electronic health and education services, are enormous.

It would nevertheless be very superficial to remain on the level of criticism of the risks and dangers and to fail to see the marvelous opportunities that the communication media offer. Perhaps the most basic one of all may be that of creating in the whole of humanity a feeling of collective belonging. To achieve that, a good many barriers will have to be broken down. The removal of the Berlin wall was a symbol of a process of unification, not just of one people but of a world divided by ideologies.

The communication media contributes to the breaking down of barriers. In the first place the geographical barriers. In ancient times only those who could travel could enter into the riches of other cultures, of other traditions and values. Today we contemplate landscapes, see monuments, and are well aquatinted with great cities, the smallest towns, and different faces of different racial groups.

The deepest impact of the media is the overcoming of ideological barriers. To critically evaluate the influence of the communications media on the changes in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe would be the subject of an interesting study. It is beyond doubt that access to the luxury of the consumer society ended with a questioning of the limitations of a planned market economy by average citizens. The revolution in his/her expectations brought about the revolution of structural changes, and all this is linked to the social communication media.

This process of the unification of humanity presents a great challenge to the evangelising mission of the church, which wants to call all men and women into the universality of the family of the children of God. Possibilities never imagined in the service of the evangelising message of the church are present in the media.

The Church in the World of Media

The church and the world are inextricably connected. The Church, "truly and intimately linked with humankind and their history" cannot live in a vacuum and be isolated from the social, economic, political, and cultural context of the world. The communicative relationship between the church and the world has, however, its own dangers. Christians are a minority in the world and their values are often rejected.

The mass media have given rise to a new language. What may be true of interpersonal and oral communication cannot always be transferred to mass media of communication. Nowhere today are people untouched by the impact of media upon religious and moral attitudes, political and social systems, and education. Television defines our world by shaping our ideas, values and attitudes. In the average home in India the TV set is on seven hours a day and the average viewer watches TV four-and-a-half hours a day. The mass media may present a fragmented view of the human person. They not only create reality; they also reflect what is happening in society, culture and family.

Mass media are a mixed blessing. First, mass communication can have great value for the church. It enables the Church to preach the Word to vast audiences; it provides information on the missions to the faithful; and it promotes universal human solidarity. The modern communication media help the church reveal herself to the modern world; they nurture dialogue within the church; and provide contemporary opinions and attitudes to the Church. Pope Paul IV uses a powerful statement in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, addressing the mass media that, "the Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not use these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect."

On the other hand, mass media have a negative side as well. The intrusion of a mass media culture may reduce the value of local churches and local ecclesiologies. William Kuhns in his book, *The Electronic Gospel* makes an alarming observation.

The entertainment media has transformed the ways, in which we believe and are capable of believing. An absolute kind of belief, as well as belief in absolutes, becomes increasingly difficult as the entertainment milieu trains people to believe tentatively and with elasticity ... The very concept of belief – to believe in that which you cannot see and cannot understand – comes with difficulty to a generation that has depended, as

perhaps no generation before, on its senses. (William Kuhns, 1969: 165-166).

We live in an era in which we are more influenced by image than by abstract thought. Reality for many, is what the media recognize as real, what media do not acknowledge seems of little importance.

Modern Communication is instantaneous

The speed of communication permits any fact in any part of the world to be known in all nations, not just at the end of long years of laborious transmission but in seconds. Human events have 'historical substance' to the extent that they are observed, shared in, and taken part in by various persons, those immediately involved and other witnesses. The real importance of a historical event is mediated by the judgement that the witnesses of this event make about the relevance of the happening. Deeds that are objectively important may pass unnoticed because of the subjective indifference of the spectators; and vice versa, events that are objectively of little importance may assume great significance through attribution to them of a meaning witnesses give them. This essential and internal makeup of historical meaning is undergoing a profound change. In the past, few people within the limits of space and time witnessed a historical event. For the rest of the humanity, the important event was transmitted through oral or written testimony.

Today the revolution in the media is changing the perception of historical events. The 'surrounding world' of witnesses may be all humanity. John Paul II pointed out the growth of a moral consciousness of solidarity:

"The fact that men and women in many parts of the world feel as though they were their own injustices and violations of human rights committed in far-away countries that they will possibly never visit, is one more sign that this reality is transformed into conscience, that it thus acquires a moral connotation." (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 38). This moral conscience that allows a personal and collective growth in humanity presupposes the communications media; without them these men and women from other parts of the world would never have heard 'as though they were their own' of the injustices, nor – on the other hand – of the sharing of other peoples in their hopes and joys. We could again cite the case of the Berlin wall, with universal application, and not just with regard to German reunification.

Now, then, faced with a humanity that is getting used to knowing in an immediate way the important facts that happen in the world, what meaning can the communication of a church that is attentive to 'eternal truths' have? How can it be present with an instantaneous application of meaning to significant historical events? May its message not perhaps arrive too late, when an event has already been put aside, when nobody is any longer interested in it? Can the church reveal the decisive character of particular events for the history of salvation in a provisional yet immediate way? The response to these questions depends to a great extent on the Church's ability to communicate in today's world. In other words, how will the old question of proclaiming the Good news get a new answer. If it has no word to say in these temporal circumstances, it will be left 'speechless' in this New World of communication, where governments, scientists, experts, and authoritative commentators are furnishing their versions of events.

Conclusion:

In the perspective of the communication age, we can see that the vocation of the church is to live out this unlimited communication of God's love, reconciliation, and wholeness to the world. Christ remains the origin and the dynamic power of the Church's communication as it proclaims the Gospel, teaches, heals, and continues the long journey out of the many forms of human enslavement into the reign of God.

P. D. Devanandan said that, "In the new heaven and earth we shall not be able to distinguish new from old. We cannot determine what shall be kept nor how, for we do not know how God shall bring his purposes for humanity and the world to their conclusion. (P. D. Devanandan, 1964:192) He called for a "creatively critical" posture. One must never identify completely with any system or ideology if he expects to make a significant contribution. Cooperation must be critical. Christianity must never allow itself to become annexed to the interests of any ideology. But cooperation must also be creative, for the Christian realizes that history is God's workshop and He, with us as His co-workers, is making all things new. The Church thus need to open up new paths of gospel communication and evangelization and break down the old patterns by exploring creatively the how the new media of communication serve in fulfilling God's Mission which is entrusted us as members of his Church.

PRESENTATIONS



Prof. Hyun-Sup Um, Korea, speaking to the participants
 To his left: Dr. Robinson Radjagukguk, Indonesia
 To his right: Ms. Agneta Ucko, LWF Deputy General Secretary



The Steering Committee

Seminar on Mission
October 25-30, 2000
Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

MISSION IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT IN THE THIRD MILLENIUM: ISSUES, QUESTIONS AND NEEDS

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Mission, that is God's self-revelation as One who loves the world, is central to the nature and purpose of the Church. The Church is sent out in mission to the world, empowered by the Holy Spirit, announcing the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and witnessing to the reign of God. The Church is engaged in the *Missio Dei*, not because it claims to know and have all the truth, but because we as the Church are part of the body of Christ, and mission is part of who we are.¹

Until the mid 1950's, the stated goal of mission was to convert the "heathen." Missiology was therefore understood as a discipline that dealt with encounters between the church and those who were strangers to it. It was this encounter which was the founding principle of missiology.

There simply was no church without the stranger, without the religious and the social stranger, both being strangers in the same sense... without the "other there is no church".²

Dualisms and the resultant binary oppositions namely, self/stranger, saved/sinner, Christian/heathen or pagan legitimated the Western missionary enterprise in the two-thirds world. George M. Soares Prabhu an Indian catholic reveals how the ideology of conquest became the controlling rein for both Christian missionary activities and colonialism outside the west. He writes,

...the Bible has been used to provide a justifying ideology for operational models borrowed from society at large. In the age of European colonialism the model was one of conquest: Christian soldiers marched onwards in the vanguard or the wake of conquering imperial armies intent on the 'spiritual and temporal conquest of pagan lands'.³

Under colonialism, the biblical "Gentile" was interpreted by the Church as all indigenous peoples whose cultures were "regarded as the work of the devil."⁴ As another writer comments,

The real motives for colonialism, were they stated... not meant merely the appropriation and settlement of unused lands – the colonists have almost always seen themselves as purveyors of some transcendental moral, spiritual, political or social worth.⁵

¹ Cf. LWF Document entitled, *Together in God's Mission*.

² Theo Sundermeier,

³ George M Soares-Prabhu, "Missiology or Missiologies?" *Mission Studies* 3:2 (1986): 85-87.

⁴ Paul Valley, *Bad Samaritans: First World Ethics and Third World Debt* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990)

⁵ Cited by Paul Valley, *Bad Samaritans*, 98-99.

Ignorance of Christ was considered sin, and knowledge (evangelism) and compassion (service) were the keys to free one from sin. The evaluations of the *strangers* need for Christianity were carried to severe extremes. One instance of such an extreme was "an Englishman called Smith, (who had) slept with at least seven girls saying they could not be true Christians until they had slept with a Christian."⁶ The need to transport the uniqueness of Christianity along with the "civilizing" tendencies in American cultures sent large numbers of American women overseas for the improvement of women in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.⁷

The missionary mentality produces a great deal of ignorance and arrogance towards those who exist outside the Christian tradition. The misunderstanding and deference towards people in other religious traditions is also implied in what is called the *Manila Manifesto* of 1989. It states that,

... because men and women are made in God's image and see in the creation traces of its Creator, the religions, which have arisen, do sometimes contain elements of truth and beauty.⁸ ... other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and that human spirituality, if unredeemed by Christ, leads not to God but to judgment, for Christ is the only way.⁹

I offer just a few examples, which explain why the word "mission" poses deep questions for many people and churches. Its close association with colonialism and the enormous injustices committed against people and cultures during the colonial expansion has left an indelible imprint on the world and Christian history. While the gospel message has been a source and power for liberation, confronting systemic evils and oppressive powers that have enslaved men and women in many parts of the world, mission and evangelization, Westernization and colonization have often gone hand in hand, producing mission theologies and practices, as well as harmful attitudes and approaches to other religious and cultural traditions. These have come under serious criticism today. We need to develop new ways of speaking about mission that name and reject the wrongs of the past, embrace what is good, and respond in new ways to the challenges facing the Asian churches and the modern world.

Mission is no longer understood in the traditional sense of converting an individual or community from one religion into another. It is felt that any understanding or definition of mission that divides the community into saved/unsaved, reached/unreached and seeks to convert people into a particular understanding of the Christian faith or separates Christian and non-Christian into disparate human communities is inconsistent with the gospel message. The rejection of such an understanding begs the question, "Is mission completed when our neighbor becomes a Christian?" The answer would be 'No.' for mission goes beyond religious conversion. Mission has been affirmed as that which is multi-faceted with multiple concerns including verbal proclamation of the Gospel, religious conversion, inter-religious dialog for mutual understanding and peace, promoting social justice, uplifting the

⁶ Anton Gill, *Ruling Passions: Sex, Race, and Empire* (B.B.C Books, 1994) 147.

⁷ Leslie Flemming, ed., *Women's Work for Women: Missionary and Social Change in Asia* (Boulder: Westview, 1989) 1.

⁸ Manila Manifesto, *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes* (Pasadena, CA: Lausanne Committee for Evangelization, 1989), 29

⁹ Manila Manifesto, *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes*, 26.

marginalized.¹⁰ Mission has also been understood as living or fullness of life,¹¹ and as struggle for justice¹² Therefore only when an individual or community experiences healing, wholeness, renewal and transformation has mission arrived at its goal.¹³

Mission with all its ambiguities, and the burden of its history is something that is continually recast by communities which seek to shape their lives in the light of the promise of the gospel. The participation in the mission of God takes place within specific, changing historical contexts and differing cultural situations and therefore bears their marks. We are at this seminar cum workshop striving to arrive at an understanding of mission in the Asian cultural context. The fact that we are discussing and seeking new directions and ways forward is indicative that we are critical of existing traditions regarding mission because the new challenges and changing realities demand new definitions and interpretations of mission and unity.

The Context:

The issues we face in mission are new and complex. And the issues facing Asia make it probably the best place to hold discussions on mission. Religious pluralism, ideological clashes, economic disparities, and much more make up the reality of Asia. The countries of Asia are experiencing economic, political and social problems which, while having their own particular character, are similar to those found in other parts of the world. Asia is the largest continent in terms of size and population and it contains a wide variety of cultures and traditions, great disparities of income and well being, and different experiences of colonialism and post colonialism. Asia is also the home of world religions and the challenge of religious plurality and religious fundamentalism is most felt by the churches in this region. Patriarchy still manages to suppress the voices of women and hinder their struggle for liberation. Our environment is endangered leading to more than just an ecological crisis. Marginalized communities, who depend on the land for survival and are integrally related to the environment, particularly the indigenous peoples, women and Dalits are further victimized. Asia has also become a continent with a very high incidence of violence where life has become dispensable. As Christian communities we are a minority and we live in the midst of people of diverse faiths and of no faith. Churches have been accused of catering to the needs of the rich and powerful within the church rather than approximate the values of the Kingdom. Thus, we are called to participate in God's mission in a context where the majority are socially oppressed, economically marginalized, politically rendered powerless and spiritually pauperized.¹⁴

Yet we need to remind ourselves that the challenges of the churches in Asia are not unique to this region. Religious and cultural plurality has become a global

¹⁰ Lalsangkima Pachau, "Towards the new Millenium in the Study of Christian Mission," in *Challenges and Responses - Church's Ministry in the Third Millenium: Implications for Theological Education*, edited by Gnana Robinson (Bangalore: ATC, 2000): 565.

¹¹ James Vijayakumar, "Mission as 'Living,'" in *Challenges and Responses*, 535-553.

¹² Deenabandhu Manchala, "Mission as Struggle for Justice: From the perspective of those who are denied Justice," in *Quest for Justice: Perspectives on Mission & Unity*, edited by George Matthew Nalunnakkal and Abraham P. Athyal, (Dehli, Nagpur, Chennai: ISPCK, NCCI, Gurukul, 2000): 42-55.

¹³ Philip Hefner, "The Church as Well of Possibility," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, Volume 25, Number 4 (August 1998): 249. Also Monica J. Melancthon, "Koinonia and Mission," *LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission: A Report*, Copy ed. Pauline Smith, (Geneva: LWF, 1999): 109-18.

¹⁴ George Matthew Nalunnakkal, "Mission and Unity in the Context of Contemporary Challenges," in *Quest for Justice: Perspectives on Mission & Unity*, 60.

phenomenon. In addition, the process of globalization makes it impossible to focus on just one part of the world. The internationalization of market economies, new communication technologies and the end of the Cold War era compel us to look at the world in all of its regional, cultural and contextual diversity. Any discussion of mission in a global context must therefore be multicultural as well as interregional, and must seek to discover common reference points which embrace the variety of ways in which both the burdens and hopes of mission are understood in the world today.

I am aware of the voluminous work on the different conceptions of Christian mission. The last couple of years have seen the meeting of several forums to discuss mission in the twenty first century resulting in the widening of the frontiers of mission and the exploration of new avenues of approach. This paper does not intend to sum up or present something that is entirely new in terms of mission strategies but call your attention to some issues that need further study and reflection for the ongoing mission thinking and practice among those of us gathered here.

The Challenge of Religious Plurality to Christian Mission:

How do we support or invigorate our understanding of openness, solidarity and co-operation in a world ridden with multiplicity of faiths and ideologies? This is a vital question in the ecumenical agenda of the church. Felix Wilfred, an Indian Catholic theologian writes,

...Christian mission in Asia today is in a cul-de-sac. It is bound to remain in this predicament unless it opens up to the world of its neighbors and empathetically understands their genuine difficulties.¹⁵

If God is love and the plan of Salvation is rooted in love, the question of openness and solidarity must be seriously considered in the mission of the church. Openness means sensitiveness to the world. In such an attitude, there is enough space to stand at the foot of the cross and say the Vedic prayer: "Let noble truths come to me from all quarters." "Openness to truth" is the first step to get rid of prejudice.

I guess the church needs to make a concerted effort to understand the world view of our neighbors and promote a culture of peace and tolerance and reinterpret the concept of universality – a universality that does not isolate Christians, but relates them in dialogical encounters with neighbors of other faiths. In the postmodern world of today, plurality has come to stay and plurality when studied from a socio-political perspective will reveal that plurality is a characteristic feature of Asia. Without it, Asia has no future. The pseudo-unity that is projected by the forces of globalization and the homogenization of culture by religious nationalists or proponents of Hindutva ideology as in the case of India disregards the fact of plurality of cultures and traditions. Programs of uniformity in most cases are those endorsed by upper castes and classes for the realization of their interests and to the detriment of the marginalized. This being the case, the church needs to be in favor of plurality and should not fall victim to any monolithic conception and practice of unity in its practice of Christian mission. Promotion of plurality should become an integral part of mission and by doing so; the Christian church will become a

¹⁵ Felix Wilfred, "Our Neighbors and Our Christian Mission: Deconstructing Mission without Destroying the Gospel," 79.

sign of hope for the minority peoples of Asia. Embracing plurality thereby becomes an issue of justice.

When we stand for justice, freedom and for people's rights, we stand for those realities and values in terms of which all faiths portray the mystery of the divine. In all religious faiths God or the divine is understood to be the absolute, 'Yes' or affirmation of all goodness, justice, freedom, love and life and as the negation of evil, oppression, deprivation, and destruction.¹⁶

"For all its good intentions and sincerity, mission that is not rooted in dialogue, and does not take the witness of our neighbour's life in God, can be misdirected, misunderstood and miss its purpose."¹⁷ And where dialogue is compromised, our witness too will be compromised.¹⁸ In our new search for right relationship with people of diverse faiths, the movement is from co-existence to dialogic existence.

Globalization and Mission:

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the resultant visions of a brighter, more peaceful future were dispelled when a far more sinister threat emerged under the guise of the word "globalization," commonly described as free trade, liberalization, and transparency. It is a process whereby peoples, nations and cultures are integrated into a single world system resulting in the destruction of identities. While the system brings people closer together, the disadvantages or negative effects are far too many to make the system credible. But globalization is inevitable and the church needs to determine how best to use the creative possibilities presented by the process for mission and engagement with cultures and peoples as part of their mission agenda and work against the negative effects which result in the impoverishment of communities and the escalation of violence.

Mission of Reconciliation in the midst of Violence:

Conflicts are unavoidable in the world, as we know it. It is a normal aspect of life in human community, a reality experienced by most people. But conflict today is leading to violence and war and it is threatening the very existence of life on this planet. This is linked to structural violence and to weapons of mass destruction, to the demolition of natural resources and to the erosion of human community within. Justice, peace and integrity of creation are thus illuminated by the reality of violence. Injustice, war and the ecological crisis are destroying God's creation as a whole. The globalization of the economy has brought with it the insight that violence is a global phenomenon. All over the world there are reports of growing acceptance of the use of violence as a means of conflict resolution (Sri Lanka, Palestine, Israel, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, to name just a few). The ideology of the necessity of violence has become so influential that even civil groups have sometimes supported the notion of violence for peace. Violence affects all societies at all levels, including within the church.¹⁹ There is no space of immunity to violence anymore particularly for women and children. Violence lies at the root of every

¹⁶ Samuel Rayan, "Spirituality for Interfaith Social Action," in *Liberation and Dialogue*, edited by Xavier Irudayaraj (Bangalore: Claretian, 1989) 64.

¹⁷ Wesley Ariarajah, *Not without my Neighbour: Issues in Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Geneva: WCC, 1999) 129.

¹⁸ Wesley, Ariarajah, *Not without my Neighbour*, 71.

¹⁹ I am sure you are aware of the most gruesome, daylight murder of the President of the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church on the 29th of July 2000 in Guntur, India.

community and erupts due to changes that are social, economic, and religious which effect individuals and societies.

For a world characterized by *shalom* (fullness of life), we need to foster global and local cultures, that value dialog and respect the richness of diversity. We need to find ways to resolve conflict which, doesn't lead to war and violence. We need to focus on living creatively with conflict at every level of society and find ways to manage some conflicts, resolve some, reconcile and transform others and build peace grounded in communities of justice.

The pervasiveness of violence in its many forms poses challenges to the churches today at all levels from the local to the global. What is *shalom or peace*? What can the church or we as individuals undertake to overcome violence and usher in peace in the nation, in the home, in the streets and in the media? What are the biblical resources for non-violent resolution of conflicts?

Dr. Theodore Ahrens in a paper presented at the LWF Global consultation on Mission in Nairobi in 1998,²⁰ called attention to this mounting violence in the world, violence caused by ethno-religious conflicts, corrupt political systems, gender conflicts and inter-religious encounters and recognized it as a missiological and ecumenical concern. He writes,

If violence should continue to be with us on the scale we are witnessing now, it is likely to make its way further up on the missionary agenda for a long time. Maybe, it will even claim a key position on our agenda so that missiology would need to develop a hermeneutics of violence and reconciliation – and in doing so discover foundation stones for a so far evasive intercultural hermeneutics.²¹

Reconciliation is the outcome of a process, which involves acknowledgment of wrong doing, coming to terms with the past, and when forgiveness is sought. The questions raised by Dr. Ahrens are pertinent to the Asian churches that live in the midst of violence. What is the role of the church or even religion in the context of violence? Whose side do we take? What is the relationship between violence and power? Should violence be given a missiological status? If so can churches make violence a central focus of their preaching? What are the religious dimensions of violence besides the social and political? What meaning does the reconciling role of God through Christ have for us?²²

Caring for the Earth – the project of Mission:

Caring for God's creation has become the text for the mission of the church in the 21st century. To care is to celebrate the sacred character of life. This is indeed a challenge for people of all living faiths. The religious resources of all people on earth have to be pooled together in seeking a God-given answer to the vexed problems of humanity today. In this respect, ecology has become a matter of faith for affirming life. In our search for a new paradigm of sustainable development, rooted in spiritual values, ecological vision in science, religion and economics are not marginal issues.

²⁰ Theodore Ahrens, "Theology: A Tool for Mission? Probing the Theology-Praxis Relationship," in *Challenges and Response*, 435-439.

²¹ Theodore Ahrens, "Theology: A Tool for Mission?" 436.

²² Theodore Ahrens, "Theology: A Tool for Mission?" 438-39.

In the modern world, 'consumerism' has lost sight of an eco-vision and has side tracked the place of flora and fauna in the web of life. Creation groans to be freed from the shackles of mortality and to share in the freedom of the children of God. Creation is groaning because of chemical weapons, atomic power plants, deforestation, industrial pollution and depletion of natural resources. As co-workers with God, it is the task of the church to work with God in reversing the suffering and decay of creation. Exploration of the riches of nature must take place according to the criteria that take into account not only the immediate needs of people, but also the needs of future generations. In an ecological crisis, there is also the issue of justice because of the consequences it has for the marginalized.

Church, Mission and Unity:

Dr. Radhakrishnan, an Indian philosopher and a former president of India, once said, "Christians are ordinary people who make extraordinary claims." I am not sure how to respond to this statement. We make grandiose statements regarding our mission and identity and yet the reality and the picture we portray to the world around us is one of a community besought with problems, and contradictions. We claim to be doing God's mission and yet we are often found to be preoccupied with internal and organizational matters (be reminded of the many hours the Church spends in the courts to have her internal conflicts resolved!), and outdated rituals. No wonder it can hardly promote mission! P. Chenchiah, an Indian thinker and theologian of the rethinking Group was extremely critical of the institutional church and raised the dreadful possibility of the church becoming an obstacle to mission instead of its equivalent, unless of course it is renewed.²³ Leelamma Athyal identifies some of Chenchiah's concerns that I think hold some truth even today. They are as follows:

- The Church though divinely ordained, is humanly constituted and hence susceptible to become corrupt.
- The institutional church and its subservience to the State.
- The power structures of the church which marginalize the powerless, particularly the women.
- The content of the message that the Church seeks to convey to the people. Is it possible that we have misinterpreted Christ in a manner that is irrelevant to our people?
- Our emphasis on the Cross and the relatively weak emphasis given to the Resurrection of Christ which gives hope in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice.
- Our inability to be hospitable to people of other faiths.
- Do we preach the gospel only to increase the membership of the church?²⁴

These concerns call for some sort of introspection on the part of the churches and the need for further reflection on our self-understanding. I call you attention now to another aspect of the church and that is its relation to other churches, even the Pentecostal churches. While it seems almost impossible to achieve structural unity, is it possible for

²³ Leelamma Athyal, "Church: An Obstacle to God's Mission? A Theological Appraisal of P. Chenchiah's Thoughts on Church and Mission," in *Mission Today: Challenges and Concerns*, edited by Abraham P. Athyal and Dorothy Yoder Nyce (Chennai: Gurukul, 1998): 41.

²⁴ Leelamma Athyal, "Church: An Obstacle to God's Mission," 51-55.

us to achieve unity in missiological terms? A unity that is manifested in the coming together of churches in conciliar fellowship to address the problems of the society? The WCC Assembly held in Canberra affirmed,

A reconciled and renewed creation is the goal of the church's mission. The vision of God uniting all things in Christ is the driving force of its life sharing. Sharing also means that we work to overcome economic disparities and social antagonisms between classes, castes, races, sexes and cultures... while unity and mission are inseparable we do not need to achieve visible unity of the churches before we address the needs of the world together.²⁵

To realize this end, the local congregations need to be strengthened because it is at this level that the fullness of the universal church is made manifest. Equipping the local congregation to participate in the mission of God is a major challenge today. As Nalunnakal rightly points out,

Mutual respect for various traditions and confessions at the local level and a common commitment to come together for affirming life in its fullness, for peace, justice, human rights, and integrity of creation, transcending differences in cultures, traditions, and confessions are the most credible ways of realizing church unity.²⁶

Spirituality and Mission:

I also call for an Asian understanding of spirituality. The kind that Aloysius Pieris says results in a radical transformation of the individual, one that also involves renunciation of the desire for wealth and acquisitiveness.²⁷ The ascetic dimension of spirituality is often forgotten or overlooked by those who espouse a liberationist stance, particularly because liberationist struggles focus on the material based liberation of the individual or community in the realm of religions, race, class, caste, gender, ethnicity etc. Personal transformation is I think a pre-requisite in the pursuit of social change and justice for the personal is both political and spiritual.

The liturgical and contemplative dimensions of life need to be on the agenda of the church. The meditative dimension of life should not be completely omitted from the mission agenda of the church in the 21st century, when humanity is in search of an empowering spirituality to cope with the complexity and alienation of life. The religious and spiritual resources of humankind must be recovered and utilized to respond to the contemporary human quest for integrity and the yearning for meaning of life in the midst of modernization, globalization and technological advancement. I must underscore that such dimensions should not be exclusively individual. It is the communal aspect of life together that is becoming indispensable in the midst of fragmentation and brokenness.

Verbal Proclamation as Mission:

Verbal proclamation of the love and mercy of God is an aspect of mission. I do not intend to confine the scope of mission to liberation alone. In as much as the understanding of mission is inspired by a religious consciousness whereby such consciousness is derived from experiences of awe, connectedness and dependence of the Infinite, I am also moved to tell in an evangelical fashion. But the telling and the listening

²⁵ Section III, "Spirit of God, Reconcile Your People," WCC, Canberra Assembly Publications, 3.

²⁶ George Matthew Nalunnakal, "Mission and Unity in the Context of Contemporary Challenges," 73.

²⁷ Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992) 41.

I refer to here has little to do with knowledge and confidence about Truth as laid out by Christian orthodoxy, rather it is about the joy of worship, awe, and dependence. Speech and silence then are part of the mission for God and of God.

Biblical Considerations:

The Bible is central for our Christian identity and self-understanding, and it remains an enduring source of authority, faith and inspiration for mission. Yet the ways in which we use the Bible are deeply contested among Christians today, and there is little agreement on the nature of biblical authority and the principles of biblical interpretation.²⁸ While we need to affirm the richness and diversity of the Bible and the many traditions of interpretation, we should struggle to come to a new understanding of how to make better use of the Bible in and for mission.

Ours is a context in which biblical interpretations do matter; they do shape our world. As the Asian context constantly reminds us, biblical interpretations have life and death consequences; they shape the type of response where the state in some cases, but definitely the church, and ordinary people make to social realities. They have effects.

The Bible is a significant text in our history. The story of the Bible in Asia remains complex and ambiguous. In many ways the Bible has been both oppressor and liberator; it has supported the caste system and struggled against it and it stands with it. The Bible is a symbol of the presence of the God of life with the church and a resource in her struggle for survival, liberation and life.

There are many scriptural texts on mission and they need to be viewed more comprehensively and not reduced simply to the Great Commission.²⁹ Those who work on discovering the biblical foundations of mission should also pay heed to the insights offered by contemporary hermeneutics, namely cross-textual, relational, liberation, inculturation and postmodern hermeneutics. Such an endeavor will be possible only by scholars but hopefully it will be by socially engaged scholars. This calls for collaboration between readers of the Bible in the academy and readers of the Bible in poor and marginalized communities, by those in the pews, where the Bible is a significant text.

Two potential problems which constantly recur when biblical scholars participate in Bible reading with local communities of the poor and marginalized is that biblical scholars either romanticize and idealize the contribution of the poor and marginalized or they minimize and rationalize that community's contribution. Both an uncritical 'listening to,' that romanticizes and idealizes the interpretations of the poor and marginalized, an arrogant 'speaking for,' that minimizes and rationalizes the interpretations of the poor and marginalized, must be problematized.³⁰ The objective of course is that with a shift in the view on Christian mission, all people, including the people outside on the periphery will find their freedom to religious self-determination. In the context of religious plurality, it may be even beneficial for the church to allow our neighbors to read the relevant passages and interpret to us the spiritual meaning of texts. Such an exercise whether with the neighbor or the community, might contribute to the

²⁸ Ivy George, "From Proclamation to Presence: Toward an Asian Hermeneutic of Christian Mission," *JAAT* 2, no. 1 (1997) 78-94.

²⁹ There are many recent articles that have very convincingly argued that the Great Commission is in some ways a text of terror for all people who do not share the Eurocentric ideology of Christian triumphalism.

³⁰ Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 49.

deconstruction of traditional views on mission and enable us to appreciate the spiritual depths of the Christian scriptures seen through the eyes of the poor and the neighbor. Appropriate and meaningful interpretations of the Biblical text is also the mission of the church.

In conclusion, I will only say that I have no pretension of having offered any new solutions to difficulties and the dilemmas of mission. Our choices are in fact very limited. How then shall we live out our mission in this world characterized by divisions, suspicion, mistrust, hatred and violence amidst religions and cultures of a diverse world? How shall we as followers of Jesus Christ in Asia actually live out our mission? Given the intelligence and expertise and scope, it is not hard to work out the details, that will indeed make a change. No matter how small the move is, if allowed to germinate, it will grow for this is how the reign of God works.

COMMUNION AND MISSION
Mission Curriculum Consultation
Kota Kinabalu, Sabah-Malaysia
25-30 October 2000

1. COMMUNION VISION: A CHORUS
(When you hear the word “communion” what is the one thought that comes to your mind? Let’s share this thought and form a chorus!)
2. THE LWF: A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES

The Eighth LWF Assembly in Curitiba in 1990 decided to change the Nature and Functions of the LWF, according to the Constitution, from “a free association of autonomous churches” to “a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship”.

Communion, as it is used ecclesologically, expresses three levels of church relation: (1) “the unity of the church across all time in space, (2) the nature of life together in the local church, and (3) the relationship between local churches in a regional and global context”.¹

According to the LWF Study on Communion, the vision of Communion can help the LWF “address the fragmentation of structures of community in our society today” as the LWF is challenged “to explore what our communion can contribute to alleviating suffering and to transforming our societies”.² In other words, understanding the church as being part of a Communion has direct implications to our understanding and practice of mission.

3. COMMUNION: A GIFT OF THE TRIUNE GOD

The Church is God’s creation through Word and Sacraments. This creation is qualitatively different from the first creation in that God has called the Church into communion with the God-self. In I Corinthians 1:9 the apostle Paul writes: “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”.³ The reality of the Communion of churches, therefore, is rooted in the communion of the triune God through Christ. It is a gift of God or rather a self-giving of God.

It is through baptism into Christ that we, the people of God, the church, are received by grace into communion with God. Communion, therefore is not a strategic association or alliance for practical or pragmatic purposes that could be abandoned if proven not to be beneficial.⁴ Communion is a reality as it reflects the

¹ Heinrich Holze (Ed.) *The Church as a Communion*, in LWF Documentation N: 42, 1997, P.13

² *Ibid.* P.14

³ *Ibid.* P. 15-18

⁴ One needs to differentiate between “Communalism” and Communion. Communal thinking, holding things in common because of blood and soil link may readily fall into the pitfall of association by convenience. The vision of Communion must transcend these forms of association by challenging us to rise to a belonging to one another in Christ.

very being of God. God is a communion (some, like Leonardo Boff, would say: God is a community). Sharing in that communion is basic to the Church's identity.

According to the New Testament, this Communion with God is expressed in the oneness of the Church; participating in the one body of Christ being nurtured with one bread and one cup (I Corinthians 10:16) and bound together by the Holy Spirit; *"eager to maintain the Spirit of unity in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all..."* (Ephesians 4:3-5)

4. A SENDING COMMUNION

In Christ we know that God's triune Communion is a sending Communion. It is not a self-centered communion seeking its own well-being and promoting its own interest. God is a sending community of love: God shares with the world what God loves the most. It means that divine sharing involves always a sacrifice on the part of God.

The Scriptures describe the divine sending community thus:

- The Father and the Spirit sending the Son to the world
- The Father and the Son sending the Spirit to the Church and the world
- The Son and the Spirit sharing the Father with the world, allowing us to cry "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)

The God who has called the Church into communion with the God-self is a God in mission! Through the fellowship of the Son the Church is both called to have fellowship with God and to participate in God's mission in the world. For the church, therefore, mission is not optional. It is not an appendix to her other activities nor is it reserved for larger, wealthier churches. It is basic to the nature of the Church and thus fundamental to her identity. The Church as a Communion is a Communion in mission! Baptism should be seen as our reception into the divine Communion as well as our commissioning for mission in the world.

The church belongs to a Communion of the "sent". In the LWF study of the Church as Communion, the relation between communion and mission is made explicit. We read:

"The church as a communion does not exist for itself. It has received a commission; it is sent into the world to proclaim and praise God. It is sent to be a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the realization of God's purpose in Christ for the whole humanity and creation".⁵

In Hong Kong, at the LWF Ninth Assembly (1997), the understanding of the church as communion was discussed even further. The Lutheran churches understood themselves as *"called in Christ into the communion gathered around Word and Sacrament, a communion engaged in mission and witness to the world"*. This communion is called to pursue a greater visible unity of the church, to be a living and witnessing community. To live as a witnessing community implies engaging in mission and dialogue, stewardship of God's creation, service

⁵ *The Church as Communion*, Op. Cit., P. 22

amidst a suffering world, advocacy for human rights, justice, peace and reconciliation.⁶

5. COMMUNION AND OUR UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION

As explained earlier, our Communion is with a God in mission. Thus, mission belongs to God, not to the church (*Missio Dei*). It is the Holy Spirit that empowers the church to participate in God's mission. The Church as Communion, both at the local level and at the regional and global level should heed the prompting of the Spirit in participating in Mission. In Paul's description of the various gifts the Spirit bestows on the Church for mission one can identify three categories of gifts, namely, for proclamation (*Kerygma*), for service (*Diakonia*) and for fellowship or communion (*Koinonia*). The LWF Study on Communion puts it this way:

"Communion as mission grows out of the gifts of the Spirit which the church has received for witness and service, for the up-building of communion in faith, life, witness for solidarity with all people. The reality of communion invites us to move beyond our limited and often inward looking forms of congregational and ecclesial life".⁷

The LWF study on Communion has a section on **Communion as Mission**. In the section we read that the mission of the church as communion in the Holy Spirit is expressed in five different ways:

- (a) Witness to God's saving action in Jesus Christ,
- (b) public confession of the apostolic faith,
- (c) denouncing unjust and oppressive situations in the light of God's word,
- (d) commitment to the transformation of unjust and inhuman situations in obedience to God's will and
- (e) The mission of the church in the communion of the Holy Spirit is thus **holistic**; service to and solidarity with people in need and effort for peace.⁸

Holistic mission, in LWF parlance includes proclamation, service and advocacy for justice.⁹ In other words, it means *"the whole gospel to the whole person to all people all the time and in all places"*.

A creative way of speaking of the church's participation in God's mission is that of the "missional church". A North American team on the Gospel and our Culture Network has developed the notion. In the book *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, the team sees the *raison d'être* of the church as its being sent, thus the church exists for mission. The mission of the church is to represent the reign of God, which has taken place in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We read,

"Therefore the church's own mission must take its cues from the way God's mission unfolded in the sending of Jesus into the world for its salvation. In Jesus'

⁶ Report of the LWF Ninth Assembly, Hong Kong 1997, P. 45, *passim*.

⁷ *Ibid.* P. 24

⁸ *Ibid.* P. 23

⁹ Report of the LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission, Nairobi, Kenya, October 1998, P.20

way of carrying out God's mission, we discover that the church is to represent God's reign as its community; its servant, and its messenger".¹⁰

The team explains that the very fact that the church assembles as community of those who live under the reign of God, thus representing God's grace and promises, is in itself mission. The church in mission is representing the reign of God as a community. The world should see in the church the reality of the reign of God, which has come in Jesus Christ.

Speaking from another context altogether, Professor Johannes Nissen echoes the same view and writes:

"The church, in fact, needs to see itself as Matthew saw it: as a distinct and appealing counter-culture, a city set on a hill, making visible the reality of God's reign in the midst of the old order: a community concerned not so much to root out the weeds in its midst as to cultivate wheat of such quality that others will see it, 'and give glory to your Father in heaven'".¹¹

What does **representing the reign of God as its servant** entail? The team puts it this way:

"Our responses of compassion and service, like our actions for peace and justice are deeds of authority and therefore signs that the reign of God is present now in our world and is on the way as its future.... Whatever our responses may be, they bring wholeness and dignity to the world and thereby provide a taste of a future in the reign of God under the rule and authority of Christ's lordship. These are signs that invite people to 'enter and taste more, to eat and be full'".¹²

The team's insightful discussion on ushering people into the Kingdom of God is very helpful in our understanding of mission and the place of service in it. The church is not to expand God's Kingdom (for it is God's reign), nor should she force people to enter it. The church is to bring the experience of the reign of God close to people so that they can respond to the gracious invitation to participate in it.

The mission of the church as **representing the reign of God as its messenger** can be summarized thus:

"If in our being the church, the world sees God's reign, and by our doing justice, the world tastes its gracious effect, then the call to all on the earth to receive and acknowledge that reign begs to be expressed. That is why Jesus said it is necessary that his followers preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Christ's name to all the nations, so that all the nations may hear (Luke 23:47; cf. Romans 10:14-17)".¹³

¹⁰ Darrel L. Guder (Ed.) *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998, P. 102, (Hereafter, *Missional Church*)

¹¹ Johannes Nissen, *New Testament and Mission, Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, Peter Land, Frankfurt and Main, 1999, P.33

¹² *Missional Church*, P. 106

¹³ *Idem*.

This is an excellent way of expressing the role and place of proclamation in the mission that God has entrusted to the church. It is one thing to say: mission is verbal proclamation of the good news followed by demonstration of what is proclaimed; it is another to say that proclamation is **another** expression of the joy of being in the reign of God. Therefore, this proclamation is linked indissolubly with community and service. This understanding of proclamation will have tremendous implications to the practice of mission worldwide.

One more missional understanding that the vision of Communion entails has to do with **participants** in God's mission. On the one hand, the LWF vision of Communion is always in the context of the worldwide *communio*. Fellowship or Communion with the triune God is not reserved for Lutherans only; it is a gift shared to all members of the body of Christ. The vision of Communion brings us to the understanding of Mission not only as being holistic (for the whole person and to all people) but also as being **ecumenical**. This entails that the goal of mission, seen from the perspective of a "sent communion", cannot be primarily church planting or church growth, but to represent the reality of the coming reign of God in the life of the world. The goal of mission, as the communion sees it, is to bring the good news of God who loves in freedom (therefore in grace) to bear on the lives of people. Churches of different traditions are free to join their effort together in a common venture in a mission in Communion.

On the other hand, Communion always expresses itself in concrete community and seeks the well being of societies. The question that begs to be asked is: Is the church the only participant in God's mission? What we have said so far is that God, through Jesus Christ, has called the church to communion with the God-self and to participation in God's mission. But God is free to choose other instruments to carry out God's mission. As communion relates to community it is essential to recognize that people of diverse faiths in the community have participated in the carrying out of the mission task of the church. This is a fact that requires a deeper study by the churches.

6. MISSION AND OUR PRACTICE OF COMMUNION

If our vision of Communion helps us shape our missional understanding how would our missional understanding shape our practice of Communion? LET'S TRY TO VISUALIZE NETWORKING (OR KNITTING) FOR MISSION. (Pieces of yarns of about 2 meters each are distributed to participants. Two participants are asked to tie their yarns together and stand opposite each other holding the connected yarns extended. Another team is asked to do likewise but tie their yarn at the middle of the first team's yarn. All participants are asked to do likewise and thus form a network that looks like the spokes of a bicycle. At the center of the network tie a short piece of yarn and let it hang down toward the floor. At the other end of this yarn tie a pen or pencil. The pen or pencil thus will be hanging from the yarn network. Place a bottle (standing without cover) on the floor, a few feet from the hanging pen. Ask the participants to work together to put the pen in the bottle by moving the yarns of the network. This is Mission in Communion. What does this exercise tell us about practice of Communion?

First of all, if the goal of mission is not church planting but witnessing to God's gracious gospel in word and deed, then competition between denominations in the

race to convert souls and expand one's denomination should be discontinued. Mission societies' struggle for mission fields or turfs in different parts of the world should be replaced by joint cooperation. Competition and the idea of "conquest" jeopardize God's mission. The five centuries of competition in mission have left a scar in the history of the church. The word "mission" itself has been rejected by many churches because of its link with colonialism and conquest for missionary influence in the world. Communion which maintains the Spirit of unity should be expressed in humble commitment, respect for others, forbearance, patience and love.

The example of the commitment of the Mekong Region Mission partners is quite promising. The participants agreed on the following vision for mission:

- the aim to have a united Christian witness which also expresses our Lutheran identity;
- to help bring about healing, peace and reconciliation to the people whose lives were affected by evils of wars and different conflicts;
- to initiate dialogue with people to ascertain their needs, concerns and sentiments;
- to include sustainable development and diakonia projects for the poor and needy;
- to train and equip national leaders and assist in the development of women and men especially within the areas of theology, dialogue and management;
- to proclaim and serve the Christians and society in this region with a holistic understanding of the gospel;
- to strengthen the unity of the various Christian groups and organizations within the region;
- to implement programs on the empowerment of women and offer educational programs for women and men that raise awareness of gender equality and family issues in church and society;
- to affirm ecumenical cooperation in the areas of research, leadership development, media and Christian service;
- to establish an ecumenical research center for the Mekong Region that will focus on religion and culture and contextualization of theology;
- to engage in dialogue with people of diverse faiths.¹⁴

Secondly, God's mission following "the way of the Son" challenges the churches to take seriously the reality of Communion and practice it with commitment or lose her "saltiness". The way of the Son is threefold:

- **The way of Incarnation**, Christ's way to the underside of history, choosing to be with and among the poor and excluded, to bring them dignity and abundant life,
- **The way of the Cross**, Christ's way of protest, standing for justice and righteousness as God's will in spite of crucifixion, being the voice of the voiceless,
- **The way of Resurrection**, Christ's way of swimming against the tide, making way out of no way, giving the last word to God, "*who gives life to*

¹⁴ Report from the Mekong Region Mission Partners' Consultation, 29 September – 5 October 2000

the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom. 4:17), and not to the powers in the world.¹⁵

Although the calling of the church is to follow the way of the Son (Mat. 16:24-28), no single congregation or national church can claim having been able to do so fully. It is as a communion of churches that we are called and enabled by the Spirit (of unity) to follow the way of the Son. As a communion we can actually be with the poor at the grassroots level (because the majority of the churches are poor) and not only talk about identification with the poor. It is in the Communion with the presence of the Spirit that we can really experience the power of poverty while at the same time setting at liberty those who have been degraded by poverty. As a Communion held together by the Holy Spirit we have the thrust to make a difference in international advocacy for justice (in economic, political, social situations). As Communion we are empowered to bring God’s transformative good news to bear on communities and societies.

Thirdly, a Communion of churches participating in God’s mission should express Communion concretely in the sharing of gifts necessary for God’s mission. One can think of resources such as human, material and financial. For the sake of God’s mission, according to the book of Acts, the nascent church developed a communal way of life, “they had everything in common” (Acts 4:32-37). The New Testament also shows that it was customary for the younger churches (of the gentiles) to make collection for the church in Jerusalem. The book of Acts and Paul’s letters also show that human resources were shared among the early church. They considered themselves as bound together in one Communion and thus shared their resources with one another.

The concept of partnership, though discussed at length on many occasions, will need to be studied and discussed at depth until any sense of superiority, isolation, opportunism, suspicion is removed from us.

Wherever the church is, there she is in mission, for by her nature and calling she is a missional church. A church or a mission society should not run away from home to hear the call for mission. Everywhere is a mission field. But as a communion of churches we believe in the gifting of the Spirit in a variety of ways, thus, we can share the gifts that the Spirit has endowed our respective churches at the service of the one body of Christ. The idea and practice of bilateral privilege relations between former “mother” church and “mission field” should be things of the past. The vision of missional Communion should be developed and promoted at the regional and global level.

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¹⁵ Cf. Péri Rasolondraibe in *Lutheran Confessional Identity and Mission*, Lazareth and Rasolondraibe, Fortress, 1994

MISSIO DEI IN ASIAN CONTEXT

By Robinson Radjagukguk, PhD

1. It is a great honor and it also gives me great pleasure to be invited to this seminar and to speak and share with you this morning one of the sub-themes of our seminar, "Missio Dei in Asian Context."
2. What is Missio Dei? David J. Bosch writes that Missio Dei (God's mission), is "God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. Missio Dei enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people."¹ Bosch distinguishes between mission (singular) and missions (plural). Mission is Missio Dei and missions (*missiones ecclesiae*: the missionary ventures of the church), refer to particular forms, related to specific times, places, or need, of participation in the missio Dei. Missio Dei is God's "yes" to the world; God's love and attention to the whole world. But missio dei is also God's "no" to the world. What Bosch writes makes it clear that missio dei is concerned with "the dynamic relationship between God and the world, a relationship which anticipates the kingdom of God, and therefore a relationship within a human community in a world which is created, redeemed and sanctified by God."² God sends himself, his Son, and his church, and the scope of the missio Dei is God's concern for the entire world. It affects all people in all aspects of their existence. It is God's turning to the whole world in respect of creation, care, redemption and consummation of His salvific act in Christ; for the salvation is for the whole universe.
3. The Missio Dei is usually found in the Gospel of Luke 4:18-19:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 10. For more details see 8-11.

² Philip L. Wickeri, "Dialogue and Resistance: Mission in the Context of Globalization," in *Celebrating Life in Asia: Selected Papers from the Second Congress of Asian Theologians*, CTC Bulletin, Vol. XVI, No. 1, November 1999, p.46; see also F. J. Verstraelen, General editor, *Missiology: An Ecumenical introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 3-5.

In Christ, God's salvific act was fulfilled or realized.³ Jesus said: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The coming and ministry of Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. Jesus appears in public and acts as the Anointed of God who performs liberating deeds in the framework of a lasting, indeed an everlasting covenant (Isa. 61:8). Luke 4:18f. emphasizes the proclamation of the gospel ("the good news"), and proclamation of the gospel is a definition of mission that occurs very often in the New Testament (Mark.16:15; 13:10; 14:9; Rom.1:1; 1:16; 1 Kor.1:17, etc.). In Luke the proclamation of the gospel gives a strong emphasis upon the poor. "The Gospel is for the poor." The Latin American Bishops Conference at Puebla (1979) and the World Missionary Conference at Melbourne (1980) "regarded the missionary preferential option for the poor as central."⁴ Christ is to seek a just, sustainable and participatory society – a social order that attempts to be inclusive – and pays particular attention to those whom the world regards as the "least of these." Michael Amaladoss writes, "He [Jesus] sought to free people from oppressive social and personal situations. In a world in conflict, he chose the side of the poor, the powerless, the sinners, and the marginalized of his day, promising them liberation through deed and word (Luke 4:18-21). Following Jesus, our mission is to opt for the poor, look at the world through their eyes, challenge the oppressors to conversion, and seek to transform the world, thereby ushering in God's reign."⁵

4. Many Christians used to understand that the mission of the church was limited "to inviting persons to become Christians and preparing them for baptism." This understanding is no longer adequate to take mission in the restricted sense of a mandate that Christians assume with regard to other people.⁶ But as what the Vatican Council documents and more recent statements like *Evangelii Nuntiandi* express the

³ M. R. Spindler, "The Biblical Grounding and Orientation of Mission," in F. J. Verstraelen, *Missiology*, 128-131, describes three different concepts of mission among Bible scholars and missiologists: 1). Mission is to make disciples of all nations. "Make disciples of all nations" is part of the missionary mandate spoken by Christ in Matthew 28:19. 2). Mission is deliverance, emancipatory action. Jesus appears in public and acts as the Anointed of God who performs liberating deeds in the framework of a lasting, indeed an everlasting covenant (Isa. 61:8). Mission is understood in the terms of Isa. 61:1f., which is cited in Luke 4: 18f. as Jesus' messianic program. 3). Mission is witness. The Biblical basis for this understanding of mission is usually founded in Acts 1:8.

⁴ Ibid., 130.

⁵ Michael Amaladoss, SJ, "Mission," *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, edited by Virginia Fabella & R.S. Sugirtharajah (Meryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 145; see also M. R. Spindler, "The Biblical Grounding," 130, who writes: "Proclamation in word is closely linked with concrete deeds of liberation breaking through the structures of oppression and injustice that force the poor into their situation of poverty and hold them there by violence. Mission thus aims to restructure society as a whole on a global scale. It aims, that is, at the kingdom of God. It is an ambitious program, and it breaks out of the traditional separation of church and world, church and state, and spiritual and political power."

⁶ Verstraelen, *Missiology*, 4.

concept of evangelization in broader terms: “Christians should work to bring about a change in ‘personal and collective consciences of people, their activities and ways of life, and the milieux in which they live’”⁷ The Biblical warrant for mission was no longer the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-19). The church is called to be co-workers with God in the *Missio Dei*, proclaiming and living out God’s love. The church stands in the service of God’s turning to the world, “representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany. In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God’s reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil.”⁸ It is quite often that religion, instead of defending the poor, becomes a part of the hegemony of power. The poor people becomes the victims, since they have no alternative to live. In line with this proclamation, the Founding Congress of Asian Theologians at Somang, Korea, in 1997 made five affirmations to suggest the orientation of theology (and therefore of missiology) in the Asian context:

- people are the center of theological reflection
- the aim of theology is to help people and serve the churches in the practice of faith
- such theology should be ecumenical in nature
- this ecumenical vision includes the whole of humankind, the integrity of creation and the community of communities
- This ecumenical theology should mobilize the humanistic and liberating vision of religions for building a community of justice and peace.⁹

The Founding Congress of Asian Theologians can be understood as the embarkation on a new journey of doing theology by reflecting on the great diversity and contradictions which are emerging in the present realities of Asia. Some of the issues that brought into discussions are related to the meaning of the reign of God, the language of God-talk, the imagery of Christ among the people; questions of sacrifice and suffering, human freedom and responsibility, particularly with regard to creation.¹⁰

⁷ Tom Michel, “The Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue,” unpublished paper presented at the Second Congress of Asian Theologians, Bangalore, India, 8-15 August 1999.

⁸ J. A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church, and Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 84; cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389-393.

⁹ Message of the Congress in “Proceedings of the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS), 25 May-1 June 1997,” Suwon, Korea, Part I, Published by The Continuation Committee of the Congress of Asian Theologians In co-operation with Hanil University and Theological Seminary & the Christian Conference of Asia, 1997: 53-54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

More specifically the “Message of the Congress” identified among the tasks for the future with concern for mission and missiology as follows:

To articulate a “third generation” of missiology that goes beyond the paradigms of mission bequeathed to us by the ecumenical movement and Vatican II.¹¹

5. We do not choose the world or the context in which we live and work and engage in mission. Contexts are always changing and our mission is always challenged and shaped by our political, economical, cultural forces of particular places and times. Asia is the largest continent and the most densely populated portion of the globe. Some of the largest cities in the world are found in this region. Asia was the scene of the earliest missionary efforts. The apostle Thomas is said to have reached India in A.D. 52 and labored there for twenty years before his martyrdom near Madras. The Mar Thoma Church in South

¹¹Ibid., 54. Cf. Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 122-127, identifies three periods in the modern growth of world Christianity, each with its own paradigm, which can help us understand the global context of mission and missiology. Philip L. Wickeri, “Dialogue and Resistance: Mission in the Context of Globalization,” in *Celebrating Life in Asia: Selected Papers from the Second Congress of Asian Theologians*, CTC Bulletin, Vol XVI, No. 1, November 1999), 49-53, summarizes Schreiter’s view as follows: The first period is from the voyage of Columbus in 1492 to the end of World War II in 1945. This was the period of European colonialism, the rise of capitalism as a new economic form, and the beginnings of the modern missionary movement. According to Schreiter, the dominant image or metaphor for this period was *expansion*, based on a European understanding of a universalized Western *civilization*. Non-European peoples, in Asia, Africa and Latin America became objects of European enslavement, domination and colonization. . . We may term this “First Generation Missiology.” The so-called “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-19) was invoked as the reason for the church’s existence as a missionary community during this time... There were a variety of ways in which churches, mission societies and missionaries situated themselves vis-à-vis imperialism. Christianity was in many cases an instrument for resistance against colonialism, and Christian faith sometimes inspired individuals and movements in the “mission fields” to actively resist the colonial system and the Western leadership in church and society. The second period of world Christianity begins in 1945 and ends in 1989. It coincides with the Cold War, the end of colonial empires and the growth of the non-aligned movement. Schreiter terms this the period of solidarity. The dominant metaphors for these years are *growth* and *development*, which convey a sense of *optimism* about the future. The Church’s response shifted from foreign missions to mission on six continents, evoking images of accompaniment, contextualization and solidarity. By the 1970s, justice, peace and liberation became the key terms for understanding where the churches were going. The Biblical warrant for mission was no longer the Great Commission but Luke 4:18-19. This is the “Second Generation Missiology.” The most radical development in Asia, and in the developing world as a whole, was the departure of all missionaries from China and the establishment of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches in support of the Communist Party. The third period of world Christianity is the one in which we now live. Schreiter dates this with the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989. With the end of Cold War, the United States emerged as the only super power; many believed that there were no viable economic and political alternatives to *global capitalism* and *liberal democracy*. The dominant metaphors have been *communication* and *networking*. But a certain kind of communication is implied, and this is made possible by technological advances, the growth of the world market and neo-liberal ideology in the service of the powerful... The churches’ response in this new period is not yet clearly worked out... The problems of justice, peace and liberation are more intense than ever before, but the proposed solutions no longer seem as compelling as they once were.

India is named after him. During the 1920s there were approximately sixteen thousand missionaries in China, half of them Roman Catholic. This was more than in any other country in the world. Tens of thousands of missionaries lived and died in Asia, and literally hundreds of millions of dollars for mission work have been invested in this part of the world. But after all this time and efforts, only 3(?) percent of Asia is professing Christians.¹²

6. The Christian people in Asia live in the midst of other faiths or religions. Asia contains a wide variety of cultures, religions and traditions. Asia is representative of the World. Asian people have different experiences of colonialism and postcolonialism. Asia is also the home of world religions and so the challenge of religious and cultural plurality is unavoidable reality for Asian people. And based on this reality our understanding of *Missio Dei* is necessarily diverse. Based on the Resolutions and Statements Adopted by the Ninth Assembly of the LWF, with specific reference to Mission and Evangelism Emphasis, the LWF Council voted “to ensure that high priority be given to inspiring and strengthening member churches for authentic and culture-sensitive witnessing to Christ in an increasingly plural and multi-religious world.”¹³ Our context influences our understanding of God and the expression of our faith. We can only speak about a theology that makes sense at a certain place and in a certain time. And therefore, it is clear that cultural sensitivity in witnessing to Christ is an imperative. As Stephen B. Bevans strongly stresses that the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context is really “a theological imperative.” He writes: “Doing theology contextually is not an option, nor is it something that should only interest people from the Third World or missionaries who work there. The contextualization of theology – the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context – is really a theological imperative. As we understand theology today, contextualization is part of the very nature of theology itself.”¹⁴ Further to conclude his article he writes: “Theology today must be a contextual theology. Several important movements and currents of our times point out aspects in Christianity that make imperative a theology that takes seriously both particular cultures and social change in those cultures. Pluralism in theology, as well as on every level of Christian faith, must not only be tolerated; it must be positively encouraged and cultivated. . . . Contextualization, therefore, is not

¹² See, Herberth Kane, *The History of Christian Mission* (Deerfield: Baker Book, 1978); see also, F. J. Verstraelen, General Editor, *Missiology, An Ecumenical Introduction; Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: eerdmans, 1995), 88-98, 306-332.

¹³ “Resolutions and Statements Adopted by the Ninth Assembly of the LWF and by the LWF Council,” Hongkong, 1997: 94.

¹⁴ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Faith and Cultures Series (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 1; for more details, see 1-10. Bevans refers to Henri Bouillard who said that a theology that is not up-to-date (*actuelle*) is a false theology. He even paraphrases Bouillard by saying that “a theology that is not somehow reflective of our times, our culture, and our current concerns – and therefore contextual – is also a false theology” (p. 3). Then he refers to Charles Kraft who says practically the same thing when he says that theology, when it is perceived as irrelevant, *is in fact* irrelevant. For details see, C. H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1979), 296f.

something on the fringes of the theological enterprise. It is at the very center of what it means to do theology in today's world. Contextualization, in other words, is a theological imperative."¹⁵ Globalization tends to favor a uniform world culture, which fits everywhere. Religious and cultural plurality undermined. On the other hand, indigenous and tribal people seek new identities based on their traditional religions and cultures. It is one and a real critical issue (at least in my home church as I see it) concerning the critical relationship between the Gospel (Christ) and culture. The Batak people of Indonesia say, "Adat do ugari, sinihathon ni Mulajadi" (Adat or culture is unwritten law of God). Adat is highly respected because it is directly related to God. The Bataks believe, to respect and to obey the Adat is to honor and obey God. And in the contrary, to do or to act something against Adat is to oppose God. That is why, there is a saying, "The Bataks die because of Adat." If a Batak is said "Na so maradat" (a person who does not respect the Adat) it is really a shame for his/her whole family members. And if some one says to his/her fellow Batak "You are a sinner!" With a smiling face he/she will nod and say, "Yes, I am a sinner," without any feeling of shame at all. It means that to some extent for some Batak Christians the position of Adat is still much higher than the Gospel.

7. We now live in a more and more globalized world. On one side globalization might show itself as a positive phenomenon of human fellowship and solidarity promoted through international networking. But on the other side globalization might be a threat for most marginalized people. Our challenge today is translating the Word into the thought-forms of our age. As Bishop Dr. Wesley Kigasung of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea¹⁶ says that the Word must be released into our contemporary crisis. It requires an entry into the tensions of today until this living Word is clearly understood. People are helped to see the Word alive in the whole of life. In Christ, God is dealing with human-kind and in Christ we are freed from the lordship of evil. In the redemptive work and life of Christ, we find the true living Word. Christ is the proclamation of God and the whole life and work of the Christians must be this proclamation or witness. The one element by which the church lives is the Word of God. Scripture must break into thought forms as well as words. Before this living Word, doctrinal interpretations, tradition and all divisive problems are ultimately subject. The Word of God is and should remain the sole rule and norm of all doctrine, and no one person's writings dare to be put on a par with it, but that everything must be subject to it. Dr. Peri Rasolondraibe, LWF/DMD

¹⁵ Ibid., 10; cf. S. Anita Stauffer, "Worship: Ecumenical Core and Cultural Context," in *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*, edited by S. Anita Stauffer (Geneva: Department for Theology and Studies, Lutheran World Federation, 1996), p. 21 writes: "Christians can neither ignore culture, nor reject it. But we see it in relative terms; human culture can never be an absolute to which our highest allegiance is given . . . However, the danger in it is not only syncretism, but also cultural captivity. And cultural captivity of any kind is idolatry, because God alone is the Holy One." Then Stauffer refers to Kosuke Koyama who has the same understanding when he writes that the Gospel "cannot be completely adjusted, indigenised, contextualised, accommodated, adapted, re-symbolized, acculturated, inculturated and incarnated to culture. The Gospel displays its authentic power in its refusal to be completely indigenised.... A perfect indigenisation is an idolatry of culture."

¹⁶ Wesley Kigasung, "Lutheran Messages: The Challenge of Contextualization," Keynote Address at Global Consultation on Theological Education, August 23-28, 1999, Rome, Italy (unpublished).

Director, in his Introductory Remarks in welcoming the participants of the Global Consultation on Theological Education, taking place in Rome, 23-27 August 1999, in one part of his speech says that the theme of the Global Consultation, *Re-visioning Theological Education*, “evokes new visions not simply revision (to look once again) or rethinking. To use car mechanic terminology: our theme does not call for a tune-up but for an over haul of the engine.” (see pp. 2-3). What Rasolondraibe says is also true in connection with our understanding of Missio Dei in Asian Context today. The (Lutheran) churches in Asia today are called and challenged to make the Gospel, the Good News relevant for the people in every context and situation. We live in a changing world but the Word is always the same. As the Findings and Recommendations of LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission, 25-29 October 1998 in Nairobi, Kenya, clearly states, “Mission can no longer be defined in one universal formula, but must be addressed in context. The contextualization of the Word within, and also flowing from, the life of communities, has different meanings, expressions and experiences in different cultures and life situations” (see page 2). The theme of Asia Church Leadership Conference, 29 November-3 December 1999, Chennai, India, “Mission in Asia for the 21st Century,” realizes one of the priorities of the churches in Asia, that is Mission. The participants were challenged to develop new goals and see new visions of opportunities for mission in Asia, then recommended that “member churches be encouraged to affirm the Nairobi report and view mission as proclamation, service and advocacy for justice” (page 2 no.g). It is also recommended that “member churches should initiate ways of entering into inter-faith dialogues within the region” (no.e) and “the LWF initiate a study on the impact of modern technology and the problems of poverty and aging and their impact on mission and evangelism” (no. c). How to translate the Word into the thought-forms of our age. It is the urgent need for and responsibility of Christians to make their response to the Gospel or the Word of God as concrete and lively as possible. We are challenged to recommit ourselves to mission through dialogue, to struggle for change in our church and societies. We need a new paradigm of mission, emphasizing dialogue and mutual conversion in the context of religious and cultural pluralism, and resistance against the forces of oppression, exploitation and violence.¹⁷ Therefore, the (Lutheran) churches in Asia need to set up a study department as think-tank for reflection on mission.

¹⁷ Cf. “.Message of the Congress of Asian Theologians (II),” 8-15 August 1999, Whitefield Bangalore, India (unpublished).

International Seminar on MISSION IN ASIAN CONTEXT FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM
Sponsored by Lutheran World Federation (Geneva) and the Lutheran Churches in Asia
October 25-30, 2000, at Sabah Theol. Seminary,
Kota Kinababalu, Sabah, Malaysia

MISSION AND CHURCH RENEWAL

By Won Yong Ji

I. The Text: Mission's Identity and Its Raison D'être

Mission: Rethinking, Redefining, Reshaping.
As We See.
As Martin Luther Saw.

II. The Context: Mission's Operational Field

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Luther and Lutherans; Luther's Thought and Lutheranism

Overall Theme:
MISSION IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Lecture on:
“Mission and Church Renewal”

By Won-Yong Ji

I. The Text: Mission's Identity and Its Raison d'être

(“Mission” and “Church Renewal” are by no means lacking definitions. Here, by way of introduction, we merely touch on the subject.)

(Paragraph)

- (1) **Mission [missio Dei] from God's point of view is a mandate;
from man's [generic term] point of view, it is a privilege.**

Indeed, Mission is the divine mandate and an act of bringing the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ to people everywhere through word and deed. It is the privilege of the church collectively and of its members individually. It consists of the basis (theology) trail (history and stories), methods (approaches and activities), personnel (communicators), and resources (financial and other means). The mission calling has the Biblical and Confessional (for Lutherans) motifs.¹

- (2) We must read, understand and practice these words above in the light of the TEXT in which we are thinking and understanding mission and the CONTEXT where we are practicing mission in the actual life with uncountably many “changes,” challenges, and increasingly complex and varied relations with societal and religious natures. We have to seriously rethink about this new context of life, somehow meaningfully defining and relevantly reshaping our programs. The message under God's mandate is the same, but the ways of handling and communicating the task and the message cannot be the same. Furthermore, we ought to be realistic in facing the complex “Asian Context” with socio-political and cultural upheavals, especially the religious plurality. This is a highly sensitive area with national and cultural pride, not to mention the religious content of each historical religion in Asia.

- (3) Our consideration of MISSION inevitably calls for the attention of the Church. Mission is the primary task of the Church. Isn't Mission the *raison d'être* of the Church? Therefore, rethinking of Mission ought to mean a reassessing of the Church.

¹We may quote Is. 49:6; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8, Jn. 3:16; Matt. 11:28, and other passages. S.D. XI: 414-28 “. . . promissio evangelii sit universalis. . . .” Apol. VII. VIII:1-22. A.C. XXVIII. Also see: Luther's Catechisms, Second and Third Petitions. Cf. “A Lutheran Understanding of Mission: Biblical and Confessional,” by Won Yong Ji, CONCORDIA JOURNAL, April 1996, 141-153.

Church has two dimensions in one integral entity. One aspect is “divine,” as the “Body of Christ”; the other is human, as a structuralized and functional human organization which has all characteristics of any human institution, both positive and negative in nature.

These aspects, divine and human, are integrated which one affects inevitably the other. This makes our task of “church renewal,” indeed complex and complicated. However, we cannot and should not avoid or ignore it.

(4) Church history relates to us the history of the church “renewal movements.” To mention a few names, for example: Joachim of Fioris, ca. 1130-ca. 1202; John Wycliffe, 1320-84; Martin Luther, 1483-1546; John Calvin, 1509-1564; Ignatius Loyola, 1491-1556; John Wesley, 1703-1791; Alexander Campbell, 1788-1866; Jonathan Edwards, the Elder, 1703-58; Henry M. Muhlenberg, 1711-1787; C. F. Walther, 1811-1887; and many contemporary church renewal movement workers.

(5) These people in history were interested in the renewal and reawakening of the church in its spiritual and theological life. While having such concern, they in their own way expressed their respective understanding of the church and its mission.

(6) We as the Lutherans are naturally interested in what Martin Luther has done, from mission perspectives.²

- (1) Luther was an enlightened *missionary to his time*—the tail end of the Middle Ages, which was a time of considerable contentment and apathy. When the “church” thought for men and answered for them, Luther stimulated his generation to think, to be puzzled and perplexed, and to ask profound questions (cf. his spiritual struggle and *Anfechtungen*).
- (2) Luther was a fearless *missionary to the church*—the medieval Roman Church which he used to love and respect (see “Babylonian Captivity of the Church”).

²Since the time of Gustav Adolf Warneck (1834-1910), question on whether or not Luther mission-minded having interest in proclaiming the Gospel among non-Christians, was tossed round pro and con. Warneck took somewhat negative view, while his fellow German Werner Elert (1885-1954) took issue with Warneck in *The Structure of Lutheranism (Morphologie des Lutheratums)* pp. 385-402, disapproving Warneck’s views. Since the time of Elert, numerous articles and essays have been written, disputing Warneck’s original views and commenting on Luther’s idea of mission, e.g. by James Scherer, E. W. Bunkowske, et al. Karl Holl has also insisted in letting Luther speak for himself, rather than listening to what others in subsequent generations have said, which has definitely revolutionized our understanding of the Reformer, including his view on and attitude toward Christian mission. Prof. Elert in the aforementioned writing gave many helpful names and references on the issue. Also see: LUTHER DIGEST, vol. 7, 1999, p. 63, published by the Luther Academy in USA.

- (3) Luther was a thoughtful *missionary to his own German people* by giving the Holy Scripture in German, catechisms, and many other pertinent materials (cf. his Small Catechism, Second and Third Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, supporting the "home missions").
- (4) Luther was a courageous *missionary to the world* (cf. his commentary on Colossians 1:23, Mark 16:15, and other passages. Also see his Large Catechism, Second and the Third Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, supporting "overseas missions.")
- (5) Luther was an insightful *missionary to the conceited human nature* of the "Renaissance-man" = the rational man; the *homo sapiens* = the wisdom/knowledge-inspired man of the Graeco-Roman world (cf. "De servo Arbitrio"). (Won-Yong Ji)

We are also aware of the fact that the "first missionary hymn of Protestantism" was written in 1524 by Martin Luther: "May God embrace us with his grace."³

II. The CONTEXT: Mission's Operational Field

(7)

1. *Mission Context: At the Juncture of Natural Science and Social Science.*

Indeed, the real problem of modern life is the rabbit's speed of natural science and turtle's pace of social science. Frequently it is so difficult even to assess the amount of changes taking place in many areas of natural science, for example, in the areas of communication, computer/Internet field, cyberization of reality, revolutionizing human consciousness, and ventures in industry, to mention just a few – overwhelming and startling!

- (8) On the other hand, the slowness of some areas of social science, such as human "relationships" including in the family, in society, in the nations, among individuals, and in many other situations of relationships. We may know a part of the mystery of the universe, the shapes of moon and some stars; traveling to space, communicating the message through the Internet and

³This hymn is documented in WA 35:418f.; SL 10:144f.; LW 35:232-234; *Lutheran Worship* Nr. 288, verse one reads as follows:

May God embrace us with his grace,
 Our blessings from his fountains,
 And by the brightness of his face
 Guide toward celestial mountains,
 So that his saving acts we see
 Wherein his love takes pleasure.
 Let Jesus' healing power be
 Revealed in richest measure,
Converting ev'ry nation (emphasis added).

satellites, but we often do not know how to communicate with one's own family members, our neighbors and how to get along with fellow human beings. In such conflicting situation, we are now to advance our "Mission" work. We are truly marveled and often perplexed by various mass media, "home page" ministry, audio visual presentations, etc. in the cyber-world.

(9) How to discern all this complex phenomena in life and meaningfully readjust ourselves and communicate the Gospel message is the real issue. We are bombarded by the flood of information and knowledge, and increasing pressure of new models of work.

2. *Assessing the Balance of IQ, EQ and CQ.*

(10) We have known for a long time that IQ (Intelligence Quotient: Cognitive Domain) is important. In more recent time, EQ (Emotion Quotient: Affective Domain) is valued even more important than IQ. Educators, psychologists and counselors are telling us. In our increasingly "globalizing" context of life, we are in need of another new area of concern, namely CQ (Culture Quotient: Cultural Domain: my own coined term!). This CQ refers to the ability and capability of adjusting oneself into the situations with the racial, ethnic, socio-political, ideological, cultural and religious pluralities existing in our surroundings of life. Literally we are living in a "global village." The "wide world" is no longer far-away lands. We have amazing transportation and communication networks, such as fax, e-mail and other telecommunications. The entire world is an one day span; all communications are in minute's distance. No Asian land is the exception. Again under such circumstances, we are trying to conduct *missio Dei*. Indeed, we are forced to rethink, re-access, re-shape our work and new way(s) of handling the issues in life and Mission work. True, there ought to be a proper "balance" in our thinking and action, that is, balance between these different domains of the human mind. We have heard much about the first two areas, so vital for life and work. How can we then raise or increase CQ? That is a topic something we may have to give much time to explore. (A discussion topic!)

3. *Cross-section of the Rational (chih) Domain and Emotive (Ch'ing) Domain.*

(11) We have been hearing that the West stresses reason and logic, whereas the East emphasizes "feeling" and "relationships." Head vis-a-vis heart, so to speak. Not infrequently, we may hear the "Westerners" are rational whereas the Easterners are often more emotional. This observation may mean to say that the former puts emphasis on "head" and the latter on "heart." Ideally speaking, the cool (not cold!) head and warm (not hot!) heart should work harmoniously, preferably with the active limb! At any rate, this is another aspect of the context in which we are trying to proclaim the Good News. Most of the lands in Asia where we came from have received Christianity from the West with their distinct culture, social ethos and spiritualities, and lingual variations. Obviously, their traditions, worldviews are inevitably reflected in their teaching and interpreting of the Biblical message. Unavoidable!

(12) Here we may introduce some noble concepts in Eastern thought which may illuminate us with new insights. Edifying and thought-provoking ideas are found in the Chinese Confucian Classics, for example: the concepts of *jen*, *te*, *Dao*, *ui*, *ye*, *Tien*, *Ch'i*, etc. especially mentioned in *Analects*, *Book of Mean*, and *Book of Mencius*, and partly in

other books.⁴

4. *Increasing Religious Encounters.*

(13) The inevitable religious encounters among the historical religions in Asia, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity (not to mention the Primal Religions) are the most difficult issue and concern in Asia Today.⁵ How to respond to these religions is the toughest subject which all Christian traditions are confronting. Such encounter may easily become a confrontation in various levels. Some instances, as we know, may lead to physical conflict and wars. In fact, many military conflicts and wars, local or world-wide, are frequently caused by religion.

(14) There has always been the exclusive evangelization-scheme and inclusive dialogue postures, and syncretistic “middle” position, all of which have some persuasive arguments of their distinctive claims. At any rate, relating to the Mission work, there is the claim of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, that is, Christ is the only Savior for all mankind (Acts 4:12) without which the Christian witness of salvation in Christ may lose its life and its core task of Christian mission. How can we then explain it reasonably to the other options, inclusive, dialogical, syncretistic, remain the unresolvable mystery. One may also show the Biblical statement related to the so-called natural and revealed ways of salvation by quoting Biblical passages like Romans 1:18ff.

(15) Christian mission inevitably confront, theologically and practically, the question of religious encounters, especially in Asia where the Christians are in general minority and where most of the leading world religions have their birth with majority adherents and influence. Their influence and aggressive nature may increase in the future. Therefore, we should think about a church renewal also from this perspective.

(16) Religion has an amazing nature of the best and of the worst. It can be the most forceful to generate and to transform human being for daring self-sacrifice for others renouncing even one's own mundane life for the will of the transcendent (God) and the life yonder (martyrdom) – such an undiscernible positive force! On the other hand, religion also has the opposite nature, deeply destructive, violent and intolerant which can be mobilized in the name of the divine supernatural being. Under its influence, people also gladly and willingly give up their lives for something

⁴One may have a profitable reading: *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study of Jen and Agape*, by Xinzhong Yau, 1996, 263p. Prof. Hyun Sub Um of Luther Theological University made a comprehensive study on “Ch’i or Ki” in THEOLOGY AND FAITH, XI, 103-173 (In Korean).

⁵I would like to call attention to the special issue of MISSIOLOGY (an international review), vol. XXVIII, Nr. 1 (January 2000), on “the New Millennium and the Emerging Religious Encounters.” Also cf.: “The Inevitable Encounter with Natural Worldviews,” by Won Yong Ji, in *Let Christ Be Christ*, ed. by Daniel N. Harmelink, Tentatio Press, 1999, pp. 141-152.

greater than their own earthly life. For this reason, there has been an uncountable number of savage acts and wars engaged in history in the name of religious loyalty.

(17) With the high advancement of natural science in general and the terrifying weapons of all sorts, something must be done soon in order to curb such a destructive force that is religiously motivated; and somehow to direct the positive role of religion in this confused global village. Who can do that, even partly? The United Nations (UN) can be a possible choice, even though the UN itself seemingly has many limitations.

(18) **I propose this pan-Asian Seminar on the Church and Mission to ask the General Secretariat of Lutheran World Federation to communicate this concern to the UN to initiate a new “Religion Law,” which strongly prohibit any open public condemnation and denunciation with obviously malicious intention.**

(19) This proposal is based upon the fundamental right of religious freedom together with the codes of human rights and health concern, and pursuit for world peace, etc. which the UN has been until now advocating and promoting. Religious encounters will be a vitally important and crucial issue in the new millennium, consequently affecting world peace and human survival. Healthy religion provides a healthy way of life in this world, ethically sound, spiritually fulfilling, socially contributing, personally satisfying, as well as giving a hopeful perspective on the life hereafter. Does the Lutheran Church meet such a need of the people, a living and dynamic religion, as Luther said? Religion, even more than science, is the vital topic of concern in the new millennium.

5. *Cyberculture and the Real World*

(20) The world is rapidly changing. So is Asia. New ideas, new concepts, new developments, new ventures, and even new language and strange new ways of doing things appear to be everywhere. One area is the “cyber-world” or cyberculture, not real but more vivid in appearance. One’s dreams and imaginations can even be put on a graphic level which may easily confuse the real world. The implication of the cyberculture can be making things relative and only seemingly real. In the mind of the unmatured, it may easily mean a fantasy and idealism. This certainly affects one’s understanding and interpretation of reality, the real world. Will this new development not be a surprise in the comprehension of Christian message which claims the absolute nature of the truth? This is another new phase of our life’s context in which we are trying to proclaim the Gospel. What can we do about it?

III. The TASK: Renewal of the Church

(21) Why renewal? Renewal, like the Reformation in the 16th century, is called for because there is something to be renewed, reformed, reexamined for the real nature and tasks of the church. We hope that this Seminar on Mission in Asia would be a “wake-up call” as well as a new starting point at the opening of the 21st century for the Lutheran churches in Asia and our generous partner churches in the West. This section of my address somewhat reflects the situation of Korean Protestantism today, both positive and negative. Your wise discretion is

needed.

1. *Renewal Elements Within the Church*

Church renewal should begin from within, the base level of church life. The following points may be mentioned:

(22) (1) We need the integrity of theology and ethic: the sound theological principle (doctrines) and the ethical/moral practice in life, traditionally called, justification and sanctification, faith and good works, theory and practice. One may know how to say many nice religious words but frequently don't know how to practice. Christianity, understood by the Lutherans, is not a religion of ethic, but it is an ethical religion. Therefore, any form of ethical or moral failure certainly hurts the credibility of the Christian message.

(23) (2) "Churchgoers" and "Christ-people" (Christians) are not the same. There may be many churchgoers, but not all of them seem to be "Christians," the imitators of Christ, even from the secular standard of honesty and sincerity.

(24) (3) There is indeed the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church, the Body of Christ. On the other hand, there is the organizational, institutional, hierarchical, financial, political church which has the same characteristics of any other non-religious organization. These two aspects of the church are somehow interrelated or intermingled in this world. Consequently, there can easily be visible any worldly nature of the organizations, even in the Lutheran Church.

(25) (4) "Leader" and "leadership" are in close proximity, but not automatically identical. There are many leaders without leadership. That's a problem. If 'leader' is illustrated with canvas, the 'leadership' is the 'art work' (painting) on it. The basic ingredients of leadership in the new millennium are, as mentioned earlier, the IQ, EQ, and CQ. The "Christian" leadership asks for one more: the SQ (Spiritual Quotient: The Faith active in Christian Love).

(26) (5) "Authority" and authoritarianism have the same word root, but not the same meaning. Pastors, missionaries and theologians ought to have without question both spiritual and professional "authority," but the same people with authoritarianism may eventually disqualify and nullify their authority itself.

The church renewal must start from these base areas where all Christians, pastors, and church administrators are personally involved. Without their attitudinal and practical renewal, no church renewal can even be realistically expected.

2. *Spiritual Renewal of the Church*

(27) This is the crucial spot in the Lutheran churches in the West and in the East, in my observation. Is there distinctly Lutheran spirituality? One may hear some theologians' formulated statements and categories (such as, the Word and Sacraments, liturgy, etc.). Are the

people satisfied? Do the Lutherans have spiritual *kam-kyuk* (equivalent words: inexpressible joy and excitement)? How much is true when we hear certain negative remarks, such as, Lutheranism is stereotyped, no feeling, no spiritually uplifting experience, no warm hearted communion, etc.? Lutherans seem to be good in emphasizing spiritual edification and growth of their own members but not so active and effective in the endeavor of evangelization of the non-Christians and unbelievers. This trend is somewhat reflected in Lutheran mission overseas. Lutherans are cautious and consequently slow. This can be a positive virtue, but at the same time signifies the lack of initiative and creativity. They are not well equipped comprehending the spiritual ethos of our time, especially the younger generations. One may compare this aspect with the performances of the Lutherans and other evangelical churches and charismatic groups.

3. *“Church Growth” and “Mega-Church” Trends and Critique*

(28) Church growth movement and trend appear to be based upon a modern ecclesial capitalism, both in theory and practice. One of its consequences is the impressive “mega-church” practice. The tendency of meeting more what the people want than what they really need, religiously and spiritually speaking, is clearly evidenced. Numerical growth is the prioritized goal. Without question, we find in it a certain significance. Church member should grow, thus more people become Christ-people. The Protestant Christendom in Korea, mostly the Reformed and revivalistically and charismatically oriented, is a classic example in the number of churchgoers and mega-churches. Many Christians and missionaries in the world are giving their superlative appraisal, in recent time, to the churches in Korea for their phenomenal growth and the evangelistic zeal and enthusiasm by sending out many missionaries to the world. This is definitely one side of the story.

(29) Nowadays, increasing voices of self-criticism and critical assessment of the Protestant churches in Korea are also expressed from within, by serious minded pastors, theologians and church people themselves.

(30) Jong-Nam Cho, the former president of Seoul Theological University expressed in his open lecture at the 9th International Theological Conference on the Holy Spirit in May 18, 2000 in Seoul, under the title “The Renewal of Korean Church and the Direction of the Spirit Movement”:⁶

Until now, the churches in Korea have achieved numerical growth with absence of internal renewal . . . added many nominal Christians. The church must be renewed. As we have learned in history, a church without “renewal” has produced the corruption within. . . We say that Korean Church is great in number, but the Korean society is ever more corrupt with participation of churchgoers. This shows that the spiritual competency of the church affecting society has been minimal. Aren’t we hearing nowadays that the

⁶Prof. Cho is a leading theologian of Wesleyan Denomination in Korea. He gave this lengthy expository lecture in Korea on the situation of the Protestant churches in light of the renewal movement of John Wesley. His opinion is a distinct representative view.

church itself is corrupt? There is something seriously wrong. . . .

(31) The former president of the Lutheran Church in Korea, Hae Chul Kim made a critical view on the mega-church trend and expressed his opinion about a closer Christian fellowship-oriented smaller congregations.⁷

(32) The above scholars among many others are by no means against evangelism, mission, growth of the church, as such, etc. On the contrary! We are against the wrong trend of increasing merely number and quantity with the expense of or ignoring what the Christian church, the body of Christ, ought to be. Serious hearing is necessary!

4. *One Thing That is Needful*

(33) Lutheranism by its nature and the Lutheran Church in expressing its spirituality and doing evangelism, are more geared toward the spiritual edification and growth of their own denomination, stressing the importance of education, and not so much for the interest and conversion of the non-Christians. The Lutheran message from its pulpit and the ways of communicating are usually "theological." Their language in its use and meaning is historically Lutheran and generally understandable to themselves. On the other hand, their message is frequently hard for the outsiders to grasp meaningfully. In general, the Lutheran message is doctrinally undisputable(!), historically sound and correct, and didactic in character. However, it is not so suitable for being "evangelistic" calling for conversion. These comments are by no means intended to be negative for the Lutherans. Inevitably, we may think about some alternatives. To do this important task, we have to be more cooperative with good team-work. How can we Lutherans be more active in mission?

IV. The Lutheran Vision and Perspective

(34) Lutherans seem to have lost the "direction" (Konturverlust) in the midst of the wild wind of entertainment culture today, in the jungle of information and an explosion of knowledge. They sit comfortably with contentment and reciting the noble heritage and discovery in history, often with intellectual articulation and development of doctrines. On that they made a distinct contribution to the Christian church and its theology. They are proud of that. Now, the time, not the Truth, has changed and rapidly changing at an amazing speed in all areas. Our generation pushes us to the appeal not only to head, but also to heart and limb (will, action). It asks for a total approach to life and religion. In fact, the Lutherans, illustrating with Lutheran World Federation, were intensely and seriously talking and discussing about, already in the 1960s and '70s, Proclamation and Development, Humanization and Evangelization, Mission and Social Action. On the level of concepts, there were indigenization, internationalization,

⁷Hae Chul Kim, "Pastoral Ministry in Korea: Present Situation and Future Perspectives," (in Korean) THEOLOGY AND FAITH, XI: 75-101, Luther Theological University/Seminary, Korea. Cf. "Problem and Solution Found in the Current Protestantism in Korea" (in Korean), by Won Yong Ji at the Pastoral Leaders' Seminar, Yonsei University Lecture, May 22, 2000.

contextualization, globalization, etc. of mission. Further, the significant idea of “Communio” was introduced. One can find many documents in the file of the LWF, I am sure. I personally was involved for a decade in the deliberation. Since then, have we made some noticeable advancement and improvement in the past three decades?

With this background in mind, what are our (Lutherans) vision, dream and aspiration?

(35) 1. Our starting point should be a realistic “Selbstbesinnung” on our time and its need, not so much what they want but more on what they need, spiritually and religiously, and do something by getting up from the comfortable nest of tradition and intellectual fortress, and encounter the real world of the new millennium. Know who we really are!

(36) 2. As frequently said, the Lutherans have a rich heritage, e.g. on the church, ministry, liturgy, doctrines and history, and other important foundation of the Lutheran Communion. Then, we are seriously in need of going out to the real world, not a Lutheran cyber-world, and make contribution to the lonely hearts and the Gospel message to the confused life in boredom. To do this task we ought to discern both the positive and negative roles of the amazing communication networks with ever advancing computer/Internet culture. They can do great wonders as well as tragic damage to human life. We naturally look for the good use of these scientific discoveries for the divinely mandated mission.

(37) 3. Theological contribution and the Reformation heritage are priority items for the Lutheran church. Will that contribution continue in the new Millennium? There are some doubtful signs here and there. First of all the Lutherans in the land of Martin Luther itself, to begin with, and other lands in Europe and North America from where many missionaries were despatched to Asia, and leading thinkers and theologians had their birthplace, seem to be declining in their spiritual vitality and vision. The picture in other continents, limiting to the influence of Lutherans, the prospective is not brighter. The constant question is: what is wrong? Where is the “leakage” of strength and vitality? Why are the other churches in Africa and some parts of Asia, not necessarily Lutherans, increasing and appearing to be active? Is there hope and future in Lutheranism? My reaction is more positive than negative. Indeed, the “renewal” concerns for us. – Stop being too retrospective and timid for future perspective. – Translate theology and doctrines into ethic (life), uplifting both essence and existence. – Try to meet the entire human need: head, heart and limb. “Doctrines” are important and theological discourses and debates can be interesting and thought-provoking, but an excessive(!) doing can be “boring” and repelling people’s interest. There ought to be life, meaningful and relevance.

V. Closing Remark: Luther and Lutherans; Luther’s Thought and Lutheranism

(38) In closing, as a life-long student of Luther’s thought, Lutheranism in history, and dogmatics, I would like to pose with some questions for reflection.

- Is Luther’s thought (Theology) and contemporary Lutheranism the same?
- Are Luther’s understanding of the church, ministry and mission and our view the same?
- Are Luther’s views of church renewal (reform) and mission renewal same as ours?

– We say that Lutherans are the heirs of Luther. Truly or nominally?

We are searching for the ways of church and mission renewals where the Lutheran future lies. Church renewal means Mission renewal, and vice versa. By no means, should we confuse the ideal and reality or the cyber-world and the real-world which come to us as an ever increasing pressure.

(39) Let me quote a few meaningful passages: reminding that our forefathers were indeed mission-minded.

“Let Jesus’ healing power be revealed in richest measure, converting ev’ry nation.”
(M. Luther)

“... promissio evangelii sit universalis . . .” (SD XI:28. Also the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer in Luther’s Large Catechism)

“If we as a church no longer witness to this Gospel of salvation by grace, w would be of no use in the world; no longer the salt of the earth, we would be fit only for the dunghill.” (F. Pieper)

The Lutheran Church by nature is Biblical, confessional, liturgical, ecumenical,⁸ and missional. Let’s think about it!

(40) Be strongly aware of the need of Mission,
Have genuine love for Mission,
Realizing that we are in Asia, living in Y2K Onward!

Professor Won Yong JI, Th.D.
Secretary for Asia (1968-75), DCC – Lutheran World Federation
Theological Secretary, MISSIONSWERK, ELK-B, Germany (1975-78)
Professor of Systematic Theology (1978-98, since then, Emeritus)
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO USA
Luther Theological College/Seminary, Korea

⁸Being “ecumenical” in the sense that the Lutheran Church is not sectarian, sectional, parochial, denominational in a narrow sense. It transcends race, tribe, class, and nation, the worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

CURRICULUM FOR TRAINING IN MISSION

Objective:

The course is intended for pastors, laypersons and church workers (both men and women from selected churches in Asia. The course will endeavour to equip such people engaged in mission outreach programmes. It will emphasize the call and commitment to God's Mission among the rural and the urban communities. The mission in the Old and the New Testaments, Mission in the history of the church with special reference to the Asian context will be studies

It is aimed also to develop an awareness, sensitivity and the ability to address the issues of poverty and religious pluralism; globalization and market economy and violence that characterize much of Asia Today. While doing this there is emphasis on how these specially affect women, youth, children, the other oppressed minorities and the earth.

Note:

This course is intended for one month (four weeks). Everyday (Monday through Friday) the participants spend time in classroom. Since there are four Saturdays during the course period, one of the Saturdays could be for local sight seeing and the other Saturdays for exposure programme to places like – visiting slums, developmental agencies, NGOs, church development programmes.

TRAINING IN MISSION
TIME TABLE
WEEK ONE

	08:30 - 9:30	09:30 - 10:30		11:00 - 12:30		02:30 - 04:00		04:30 - 06:00
MONDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section I Chapters 1 & 2	History of Missions Section I Early Church History	COFFEE BREAK 10:30 – 11:00	Biblical Foundation of Mission Section I (Old Testament) Creation and Mission (Genesis Chapters 1 & 2)	LUNCH BREAK 12:30 – 02:30	Evangelism Section I Preaching the Good News	COFFEE BREAK 04:00 – 04:30	Justice Issues Section I Mission and Globalization I
TUESDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section II Chapters 3 & 4	History of Missions Section II Importance of Creeds		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section II (Old Testament) Election and Mission (Genesis 12 & Amos 3&9)		Evangelism Section II What is Mission?		Justice Issues Section II Mission and Globalization II (Economy and Consumerism)
WEDNESDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section III Chapter 6: 1-7	History of Missions Section III Reformation and its message for today		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section III (Old Testament) Covenant and Mission (Genesis 9 & 15; Exodus 19)		Evangelism Section III What is context?		Justice Issues Section III Mission and Women (Impact of Globalization)
THURSDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section IV Chapter 6:8-7:60	History of Missions Section IV Reformation and its message for today		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section IV (Old Testament) Law and Mission (Exodus 20-23; Deut. 15)		Evangelism Section IV An Analysis of the Present Day Context		Justice Issues Section IV Issues of Poverty
FRIDAY	Bible Study Section V Chapter 8	History of Missions Section V Rise of Pietism, Evangelical Awakening		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section V (Old Testament) Kingship, Priesthood & Mission (Samuel, David and Ahab)		Evangelism Section V An Analysis of the Present day Context – Participants view		Justice Issues Section V Mission and Human Rights I

TRAINING IN MISSION

WEEK TWO

	08:30 - 9:30	09:30 - 10:30		11:00 - 12:30		02:30 - 04:00		04:30 - 06:00
MONDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section VI Chapter 9	History of Missions Section VI Rise of Pietism, Evangelical Awakening	COFFEE BREAK 10:30 – 11:00	Biblical Foundation of Mission Section VI (Old Testament) Early Prophets and Mission (Elisha and Elijah Stories)	LUNCH BREAK 12:30 – 02:30	Evangelism Section VI Mission and Church (Her Call and Nature)	COFFEE BREAK 04:00 – 04:30	Justice Issues Section VI Mission and Human Rights II
TUESDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section VII Chapter 10	History of Missions Section VII Emergence of Missionary Societies – aims and Goals		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section VII (Old Testament) Classical Prophets and Mission (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel)		Evangelism Section VII Local Congregation in Mission		Justice Issues Section VII Mission and Human Development I
WEDNESDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section VIII Chapters 11&12	History of Missions Section VIII Foreign Missions – Main Agenda		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section VIII (Old Testament) God's kingdom and Mission		Evangelism Section VIII Global Church Partnership		Justice Issues Section VIII Mission and Human Development II (Participants Reflections)
THURSDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section IX Chapter 13:1-5	History of Missions Section IX Missions around the World (Relevant portions)		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section IX (Old testament) Implications of Mission in the OT – Discussion		Evangelism Section IX Mission and the Unreached I		Justice Issues Section IX Mission and the Marginalised
FRIDAY	Bible Study – Book of Acts Section X Chapters 13:6 – 14:20	History of Missions Section X Missions around the World (Relevant portions)		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section X (Old Testament) Paper Presentation		Evangelism Section X Mission and the Unreached II		Justice Issues Section X Mission and Gender Sensitivity

TRAINING IN MISSION

WEEK THREE

	08:30 - 9:30	09:30 - 10:30		11:00 - 12:30		02:30 - 04:00		04:30 - 06:00
MONDAY	Bible Study— Book of Acts Section XI Chapter 15	History of Missions Section XI Participants' Own Church		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XI (New Testament) Incarnation and Mission		Evangelism Section XI Mission and Religious Pluralism		Justice Issues Section XI Mission and Ecological Concerns I
TUESDAY	Bible Study— Book of Acts Section XII Chapter 15:36 - 41	History of Missions Section XII Legacy of the Mission Boards/Societies	COFFEE BREAK 10:00 - 11:00	Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XII (New Testament) Preparation and Mission (John the Baptist, Disciples)	LUNCH BREAK 12:30 - 02:30	Evangelism Section XII Mission & Religious Fundamentalism	COFFEE BREAK 04:00 - 04:30	Justice Issues Section XII Mission and Ecological Concerns II
WEDNESDAY	Bible Study— Book of Acts Section XIII Chapters 16:1 - 18:23	History of Missions Section XIII Legacy of the Mission Boards/Societies		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XIII (New Testament) Priorities and Mission (Jesus' Model)		Evangelism Section XIII Mission and Communication I		Justice Issues Section XIII Communication in relation to Justice Issues
THURSDAY	Bible Study— Book of Acts Section XIV Chapters 18:24 - 20:38	History of Missions Section XIV Present day Challenges		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XIV (New Testament) Discipleship and Mission		Evangelism Section XIV Mission and Communication II		Justice Issues Section XIV Communication in relation to Justice Issues
FRIDAY	Bible Study— Book of Acts Section XV Chapters 21 - 26	History of Missions Section XV Present day Challenges		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XV (New Testament) Jesus' Teaching and Mission (Sermon on the Mount, Parables)		Evangelism Section XV Mission and Christian Education		Justice Issues Section XV Encounter of Faith & Science

TRAINING IN MISSION

WEEK FOUR

	08:30 - 9:30	09:30 - 10:30		11:00 - 12:30		02:30 - 04:00		04:30 - 06:00
MONDAY	Bible Study— Book of Acts Section XVI Chapters 27 – 28	History of Missions Section XVI Discussion	COFFEE BREAK 10:00 - 10:30	Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XVI (New Testament) Nature and Mission (Ecological Concerns)	LUNCH BREAK 12:30 - 02:30	Evangelism Section XVI Mission and Healing Ministry I	COFFEE BREAK 04:00 - 04:30	Justice Issues Section XVI Mission and Post Modernity I
TUESDAY	Bible Study— Book of Acts Section XVII Discussion	History of Missions Section XVII Discussion		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XVII (New Testament) Church, Unity and Mission		Evangelism Section XVII Mission and Healing Ministry II		Justice Issues Section XVII Mission and Post Modernity II
WEDNESDAY	Bible Study Section XVIII Paper Presentation	History of Missions Section XVIII Paper Presentation – Participants' own church history		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XVIII (New Testament) Mission Spirituality for Mission		Evangelism Section XVIII Mission and Liturgy (Basic Elements and their Importance)		Justice Issues Section XVIII Any other Issues relevant to the Participant's Context
THURSDAY	Bible Study Section XIX Paper Presentation	History of Missions Section XIX Paper Presentation – Participants' own church history		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XIX (New Testament) Implications of Mission in the NT – Discussion		Evangelism Section XIX Mission and Liturgy (Skills in developing new Liturgies)		Justice Issues Section XIX Any other Issues relevant to the Participants' Context
FRIDAY	Bible Study Section XX Paper Presentation	History of Missions Section XX Paper Presentation – Participants' own church history		Biblical Foundation of Mission Section XX (New Testament) Paper Presentation		Evaluation Session		Evaluation Session

BIBLE STUDY

Bible Studies from the Book of Acts outlining the way in which the church grew beginning in Jerusalem and spreading throughout Asia Minor, Europe and Rome, the Capital of Empire and even beyond to Illyricum and Spain.

The Detailed Outline

The Acts of the Apostle is often called as the Acts of the Holy Spirit may also be described as the acts of the local congregations.

Section I

Chapters 1 & 2

St. Luke, the Physician writing to His Excellency Theophilous.

Ascension of Jesus and call to the disciples to be witnesses.

The Pentecost, Peter's Sermon, 3000 baptised and the beginning of the church in Jerusalem. The life and witness of the first believers.

- The Gospel is for the whole world. 1:8 and to all the Nations 2:
- Give the names of the 12 Apostles and the possible other members who were present in the upper room.
- Identify the countries to which the apostles went preaching the Gospel according to the Tradition.
- Note the important points and the contents of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost.

Section II

Chapters 3 – 5

The works of Peter, John and other Apostles and the fellowship of believers through sharing in the community.

- The Local Church is a worshipping, serving and witnessing community.

Section III

Chapters 6: 1-7

Apostles sharing their ministry and responsibilities with others, the appointment of deacons, the positive response of the apostles.

- The meaning of the word Deacon and their special ministry in the church.
- Note the names of the deacons and their Ministry.

Section IV

Chapter 6: 8 – 7:60

Stephen's Ministry and martyrdom.

Section V

Chapter 8

Persecution and spread of the Gospel by those who were fleeing from Jerusalem. The ministry of the apostles and the others, Philip in Samaria and the baptism of the treasurer from Ethiopia, Saul persecuting the Christians.

Section VI

Chapter 9

Saul's experience on Damascus Road, Peter in Lydda and Zoppa, the vision.

- Study the different accounts given by Paul about the conversion experience noting the similarities and differences. (Acts:22:6-21; 26:1-18; Gal 1:11-24)

Section VII

Chapter 10

Cornelius the Centurion welcomes Peter and believes in Jesus

Section VIII

Chapter 11 & 12

The Christians in Antioch – persecution and imprisonment of the Apostles.

Section IX

Chapter 13:1 – 5

The church in Antioch while fasting and praying received the direction of the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul.

Section X

Chapter 13:6-14:20

The First Missionary Journey of Paul – Antioch, Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. The appointment of Elders in the Local Churches by the approval of the Local Congregations.

- Draw a map of West Asia and mark the important places St. Paul visited in his first missionary journey.
- Note the important points in the preaching of St. Paul during the journey.
- The congregations were not obliged to wait for the religious leaders from outside for pastoral care. Paul himself was a tent maker, who used his skills to help others.

Section XI**Chapter 15**

The Council of Jerusalem – the issue of Gentiles becoming the Christians, whether they should undergo circumcision as a sign of their conversion. The council under the guidance of the Holy Spirit resolves not to impose circumcision on the Gentile Converts but asked them to abstain themselves from things polluted by idols, fornication, from eating the meat of the stifled animals and blood.

- The Jew-Gentile controversy was solved through consultation and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Section XII**Chapter 15:36 – 41**

Paul and Barnabas separate – Barnabas took John Mark and went to Cyprus and Paul and Silas went Syria.

Section XIII**Chapters 16 – 18:23**

The Second Missionary Journey. The vision of the man from Macedonea, Philippi, conversion of Lydia, Paul and Silas in Prison, conversion of the Jailor, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and returns to Antioch.

- The 'we passages' begin at verse -- in chapter 16 which indicate that there was a team of evangelists with Paul and Silas.
- St. Luke, the physician is also in this team.
- Read through the Acts and Epistles and note the names of the associates of St. Paul
- St. Paul's attitude towards the people of other faiths especially in chapter 17 at Areopagus.
- Draw a map noting the places visited by St. Paul during this Journey

Section XIV**Chapters 18:24 – 20:38**

The Third Missionary Journey. Ephesus, Macedonia, Troas, Miletus. Paul's Farewell address to the Ephesian Elders.

- Draw a map noting the places visited by St. Paul during this journey.

Section XV**Chapters 21 - 26**

Paul's journey to Jerusalem. The arrest in the Temple, Paul's defence before the Council, Felix, Agrippa.

Section XVI

Chapters 27 – 28

Paul's Journey to Rome. Storm, shipwreck, Malta and arrival in Rome. Paul's imprisonment and preaching in Rome.

- Draw a map noting St. Paul's journey to Rome.

Section XVII

A Brief Discussion on the following points

- St. Paul wrote letters to these churches to discuss at length theological and ethical issues raised by new believers and churches. He not only answered their questions but also discussed theological ideas about salvation, election, ministerial functions, church and its mission.
- St Paul's pastoral concern for the churches and his own sufferings for the sake of the Gospel stand out as an example to missionaries in all ages.

Section XVIII, XIX & XX

Present a paper relating the above lessons to your context.

History of Missions

Section I

Early Church History up to 5th Century

Early Church History helps us to understand the expansion of Christian Faith from Jerusalem to different parts of the Asia Minor

It also tells us how the early Christians confronted the pagan Religions, Eastern Philosophies, Cultural Contacts and many others and will be a lesson for us today.

The two main characters of the early church were Charity and Chastity – Explain

It also tells about the church that stood firm on her Faith in the times of Persecution.

Also, discuss about the conversion of Constantine – its impact on the church – the merits and demerits of state church.

Section II

Importance of Creeds and Councils – Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed

The Church universal, specially the Lutheran Church confesses her faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

We need to discuss the importance of these Creeds in the life and the ministry of the church – its empowerment to engage in the God's Mission

Section III & IV

Reformation – Martin Luther, Zwingli and Melanchthon

Reformation is the turning point in the history of the Christian Church.

Here we study the life and works of Martin Luther and other reformers.

Why they felt the need for Reformation?

What was the context in those days?

How they confronted the situation?

The results of the confrontation

Emergence of a new church

What lessons can we learn from that history and are there any parallels in our present day context.

Were the Reformers mission minded? If yes, how? If not, Why?

Sections V & VI

Rise of Pietism (Germany), Evangelical Awakening (England)

The Modern missionary enterprise was the direct outcome of the Pietist movement, which began in Germany following the Thirty Years' War, which ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. As the Protestant Reformation was a revolt against the false doctrines and corrupt morals of the Church of Rome, so the pietist movement was a revolt against the barren orthodoxy and dead formalism of the state churches of Protestant Europe.

Analyze the context of the 17th & 18th Centuries – in the church, in the society, in the life of the individuals etc.

Explore the methods and works of the Pietists to bring in a change in such a context.

What is 'Evangelical Awakening'? – where, when, how, what

The results of the pietist movement -

Section VII

Emergence of Missionary Societies – in Germany, England, America – their aims and goals.

Lutheran Missions

Baptist Missions

Anglican Missions

Societies – SPCK, SPG, YMCA, YWCA, SCM

Section VIII

Foreign Missions – Their main agenda –

Proclamation

Establishment of churches

Medical mission

Educational mission

Industrial missions

Philanthropic Works

Any issues relating to Social Justice, Human Rights?

Section IX & X

Missions around the world

(Here the leaders should do a survey of Christian Mission in Asia emphasizing the Mission Boards/Societies involved, their missionary methods, areas of concentration. And later the leaders should concentrate on each region)

South Asia

India - Ziegenbalg, William Carey etc.
Nepal
Bangladesh
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

South East Asia

Burma
Malaysia
Thailand
Vietnam
Laos
Indonesia
Philippines
Papua New Guinea

Far East

China
Japan
Korea
Taiwan

Section XI

Beginnings of Participants' own church – Mission Board/Boards involved, Missionary Methods, Missionary Practices

Section XII

Legacy Mission Boards/Societies – Hymns, Liturgy, Prayers, Church Structure etc.

Section XIII

Church Encountering Challenges and Issues in the present day – Need for Indigenization, meaningful participation of members in the life and Ministry of the Church.

Sections XIV – XVII

Participants identify some of the challenges their church is encountering today

Sections XVIII – XX

Paper presentation by the participants about their own church and congregations and their missionary involvement

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MISSION

The concept of mission is the guiding principle of the whole Bible. There is an expectation for the coming of the Kingdom and the fulfilment of this Kingdom through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the founding of the church in relation to Mission of God.

Section I

Creation and Mission – Genesis: Chapters 1 & 2

The Creation Stories – Genesis 1 & 2. To begin with, Israel only had an account of salvation in their early creeds (Deut. 26: 5-11, Joshua 24). These Creeds were recited at their cultic centres. When David and Solomon established the Israelite Empire (9th Century BC) the people were obsessed with the idea that Yahweh was their own God that He had chosen and elected them to His people and He would destroy all the other Nations and the Nations would become subservient to Israel. Their understanding of their God was narrow rejecting all the other nations. They began their history with the call and election of their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Liberation from Egypt and entry into Canaan after a long journey through the desert.

But it is said that there was certain theologian among Israel who was concerned about this narrow understanding of their God and their negative attitude towards other nations. As we do not know his name, this theologian is called as the Yahwist, who wrote the creation and primeval story (Gen 2:2-11) and prefaced it to the salvation history of Israel. Thereby he sought to enlarge the narrow horizons of Israel's faith in relation to other nations and God's purpose for them. Genesis Chapter 1 to 2:4a is also a creation story written by a priestly writer around 5th century BC.

Both the creation stories in Yahwist and Priestly writer emphasise the creation of Humans by God and His purposes for them. In P, humans were created in the image and likeness of God Himself as male and female. In the Yahwist story God made an image from the dust of the earth and breathed into His Nostrils and man became a living being. In P God blessed the humans asked them to subdue the earth and rule over the whole creation. In J God created man to till the earth and work in the garden. The humans were created to work and take care of the whole creation. Thus in the creation itself God has set a task for the humans to perform. The word 'subdue' in Genesis 1:28 is misunderstood as having absolute control over the whole of nature which has contributed to the destruction of the planet and its ecological balance through the cutting down of the forests, irresponsible use of non-renewable resources of the earth. But the word subdue was specially used in relation to earth to furrow it and to prepare it for cultivation and production of food for the whole creation. As for the animals and rest of the Nature God has asked the humans to rule over them as a responsible shepherd. It is worth noting that only vegetable, fruits and all the vegetation of the earth are given as food for the animals and the humans. It was only later after the fall, human sin to have become carnivorous in their food habits. And similarly, the animals also began to kill each other and develop carnivorous in food habits. After the great flood, Noah and his family were saved and there was instruction to eat animals for food but this should be seen as a concession made by God to the fallen human nature. But at the end of time when the whole world is to be transformed

into the kingdom of God animals will give up carnivorous habits and become herbivorous:

The lamb and leopard will lie together

The lion will eat hay like an ox. (Isaiah 11:)

With the transformation in the habits of the animals, the humans also will probably change their eating habits. Thus, there is a responsibility given to the humans at the creation in itself to tend and care for the rest of the creation

Section II

Election and Mission (Genesis 12; Amos 3 & 9)

Israel believed that God had chosen their ancestors and through them all the people of Israel to be a blessing to the Nations. This is expressed in Genesis 12:1-3, where God makes the promise of posterity and land to Abraham and also the promise that through him and his dissidents that all the nations of the world be blessed. The history of the people of Israel is narrated throughout the Biblical account.

This understanding of God's Election made Israel narrow and they developed an attitude of contempt toward other Nations that they do not belong to the elect people and it is through Israel that other Nations are to be blessed. This gave them a superiority attitude towards their neighbours and other Nations. But a careful look at the text reveals that the words "through you all the Nations are blessed" is not in passive but in Niphal. The Niphal gives a reflexive meaning and this could be translated as "through you all Nations will bless themselves". This would indicate the Nations will claim their right from God to bless them as He has blessed the Israel. Thereby the Nations are not passive recipients of God's blessings through Abraham and Israel but are active participants in claiming God's blessings along with them.

Section III

Covenant and Mission (Genesis 9, 15; Exo 19)

God made a covenant with Abraham and through him to all Israel (Genesis 15). Israel considered this covenant as a covenant of Grace because there are no stipulations in the covenant made with Abraham. But the Yahwist mentions the stipulations of the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 18:18-19. Yahweh was on His way to Sodom and Gomorrah to destroy those cities. But Yahweh feels obliged to tell about this to Abraham because He has promised him to make a great nation and that He had chosen Abraham "that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice so that Yahweh may bring about for Abraham what He had promised to him". The Yahwist also includes a covenant with Noah soon after the flood long before God made His covenant with Abraham. This covenant relates to all Nations. Thereby the Yahwist points out that God not only made a Covenant with Israel but long before He had made a covenant with Noah which includes all nations of the earth. So Israel is only to be those who practice righteousness and justice and also insist upon these in relation to other Nations. This is the mission given to Israel to work for righteousness and justice among themselves and the world in the world.

Section IV

Law and Mission Exodus 20-23; Deut 15; Lev 25; Psalm 19:7-14; 119)

God also gave a law to the people of Israel at the Covenant He made with them at Sinai (Exodus 20-23). The law works out in detail the implications of righteousness and justice in their day-to-day living and in relation to other Nations. The Law has special concern for the poor, the slave, the widow, the orphan and the stranger who had no rights of freedom, and well being in their community. Even the relation with animals and the Land are also included in this. The Sabbath and Jubilee year are times of setting right the injustices and oppressions that were inflicted upon these. The law was a liberating force and included a dynamic for equalising the inequalities and setting right the injustices from time to time. During the Sabbath and Jubilee years, even the land is to be given rest so that it could replenish its fertility and strength. Here the Law is not only concerned about the Humans but also other living creatures and the whole created order. This points to the concern for the ecological balance and harmony. The Law makes it obligatory for Israel to engage in implementing these sacred Laws. Repeatedly there were reminders that they were at onetime slaves in Egypt and were liberated by God.

The Law was seen as the greatest gift God had given to Israel so that Israel may know how to conduct themselves in His presence and also in relation to the oppressed communities among the Nations and through out the world. This is the reason why the Psalmist sings, "the Law is sweeter than honey and is not a burden". Thus in the Law God sets the horizons of Israel's mission.

Section V

Kingship, Priesthood and Mission (I Samuel, David, Ahab)

The Old Testament also tells how God has raised leaders from time to time and helped them in setting up structures to fulfil their mission in the world. Soon after Exodus God appoints Aaron and his descendants to be priests of Israel to teach the Law, to offer sacrifices and to regulate the day-to-day life of Israel in obedience to God's will. Later when Israel asked for a King, as among the other Nations, God permits them to have kings, who may rule as shepherds and God's representatives among His people. But the kingship in Israel was different from that of Canaanites and other neighbouring Nations. The King in Israel had no special prerogatives in relation to the Law of God. When the Kings overstepped the Laws of God, acted autocratically, and oppressed people, God sent His prophets to challenge them in the name of God of Israel. The Kings and the Priests were only the functionaries with no extra privileges and rights than the rest of the people of Israel. They also had a mission to perform so the whole people of Israel may be instruments of God's mission in the world.

Section VI

Early Prophets and Mission (Elijah & Elisha Stories)

God raised prophets among Israel from time to time to bring His message to the people in relation to the new context in which they were living. Prophecy arose in Israel during the philistine domination. (I Samuel chapters 8-10?). They met together in Guilds as sons of prophets, had ecstatic experiences by the possession of the Spirit of God, declared God's message and also worked for the liberation of Israel from foreign domination. The early prophets gave oracles to the people in terms of need and distress and also participated in the political struggles of the people even in throwing down oppressive kings and setting up new kings. They were engaged in Healing and Pastoral Ministries (Elijah, Elisha) and also assisted the kings in times of political crises.

Section VII

Classical Prophets and Mission (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, call of the prophets)

The classical prophets in the eighth, seventh and sixth centuries BC received the call of God, proclaimed his message to the kings, the people and leaders of Israel to root out the oppression of the poor and injustice in the market place. They also advised the kings bringing God's message to them in times of political uncertainty and disastrous. The eighth century prophets called for justice and righteousness in all areas in the lives of the individual, communities and the Nations (Amos 5:24). The prophets proclaimed the judgement of God upon Israel as a punishment for their disobedience against God's Law and in relation to each other. They also critiqued the religious life and new liturgies while engaging in oppression of the poor and the weak in the community. They complained that the people perish for the lack of knowledge of God and blame the leaders for their indifference to their responsibilities. Their mission one of awakening the conscious of the people, the rulers and at the same time enlarging God's concern for all the Nations and not only Israel (Amos 9).

During the exile and after return from exile, the prophets proclaimed the compassion of God comforting the people of Israel and enlarging God's concern for other Nations. They reminded Israel that they were called to be servant people – a suffering servant, and also to be light to the Nations (Isaiah 42-66).

The prophet Isaiah enlarges the mission of Israel and calls Israel for a deeper commitment and obedience to God's mission.

Section VIII

God's Kingdom and Mission

Israel were disillusioned with their monarchy and the prophets looked for a time when God would establish His Kingdom upon the earth, where justice, peace and well being for all will become a reality. Nations will turn their weapons of war into implements of agriculture and production. They will stop training in military pursuits and will live peace and harmony (Isa 11: 6-17ff, Amos) The Animals, humans and nature will live in harmony.

This Kingdom becomes the main emphasis of the proclamation of Jesus (Mk 1:14). So the promised in the OT is looking forward to its fulfilment in incarnation. Some of the passages from Isaiah and Psalms are quoted again and again in the NT in the life of Jesus as a fulfilment of God's purposes as had been already declared earlier.

Section IX

Discussion Session on the implications of Mission in the OT in relation to the context and issues in the areas of the candidates

Section X

Present a paper on lessons the candidates have learnt on the study of mission in the OT

The candidates should read the relevant texts of the OT as preparation for the class.

NEW TESTAMENT

Section XI

Incarnation and Mission

St. John interprets incarnation of Jesus as Father sending His Son into this world. Jesus himself after the resurrection appears to the disciples and sends them out into the world with the words "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). God sent his son on his mission to proclaim the Good News of God. Jesus began his ministry with the words "The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Good News". He proclaims his Good News that God has sent him to initiate his kingdom of justice and righteousness. Jesus went about proclaiming this good news, especially siding with the poor and the oppressed giving them new hope to those who are oppressed, exploited and discriminated against by their own people. His parables and miracles proclaim the power of god in transforming this world into the kingdom about which the prophets had proclaimed earlier. In his sermon at the synagogue in Nazareth he quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 and says that this is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:16-30)

Section XII

Preparation and Mission

John, the Baptist, proclaimed the coming of the messiah and the kingdom and prepared people by baptising in River Jordan. His teaching that the one who has two shirts should give one to the person who has none and similarly with regard to food remind the concern of God for the hungry and the oppressed people. Mary, the mother of Jesus, also sang that God would bring down the powerful from their thrones and lift up lowly, he would feed the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty, and (Luke 1:52-53). Jesus called and prepared a band of young people as his disciples to be with him, to send them out to proclaim the Good News and to overcome all the evil that oppress dehumanise people Mark 3:13-15). He transformed the unorganised *crowds* (Mathew 9:36) in Palestine into an organised *people* with power to challenge the oppressive leadership and structures through his teaching (Luke 20:6).

Section XIII

Priorities in Mission

As Jesus proclaimed the Good News of God, he prioritised his ministry to be on the side of the poor and oppressed sections of the community. The Nazareth manifesto outlines his priorities namely, the poor, the captives the blind, and the oppressed sections of the community. He ate with the publicans and sinners. When the Jewish leaders complained he retorted by saying that those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick ... I have come to call not the righteous but sinners (Luke 9:12-13). He not only identified himself with the poor but he took to poverty as his way of life. St. Paul describes this as Jesus emptying himself (Phil. 2:6-8) and becoming poor for our sake (II Cor. 8:9). Jesus also accepted the service of women

and gave time to speak to them. Women were not given any place and recognition in the society and community (John 4:7-30; Luke 10:38-42). Similarly, he gave importance to children and said that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them (Matt. 19:13-15).

Section XIV

Discipleship and Mission

Jesus prepared his disciples right from the beginning to send them out as preachers of the coming kingdom. He gave them special teaching about the secret of the kingdom, sent the twelve and later the seventy with instructions with regard to their style of life and manner of approach to people and also gave them the power and authority to heal, to drive out oppressive evils in the life of the individuals and the community and also to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus calls men and women to be his disciple in every generation to work for the ushering in of the kingdom of God.

Section XV

Jesus' Teaching and Mission

In the ministry of Jesus, we note that he spent most of time teaching about the kingdom of God. The miracles and healings he performed were only in relation to the need of the people but his main emphasis was on teaching and preaching so that his disciples will be strengthened for mission and people as a whole will be transformed to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Mathew and Luke have a special section on the teaching of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) The Sermon in the Plain (Luke 6:20-49, 11 & 13).

The teaching method of Jesus was very different from that of the Pharisees and the scribes. The Jewish tradition was to teach from the law and the prophets, which the Pharisees had enlarged to include other regulations related to day-to-day life and especially the Sabbath. Jesus interpreted the law going back to the original intention of the various instructions in the law. He gave importance to the people and not to traditional customs and structures.

Jesus used the wisdom method of teaching inviting people to participate in his teaching and preaching. He said what shall we compare the Kingdom of God? And the people must have suggested various ideas. Jesus finally gives his own teaching on the Kingdom to parables. It was not an authoritarian teaching as a one-way traffic but a dialogical method inviting the people to participate in learning about the Kingdom and its values. He encouraged people to voluntarily accept the demands of the Kingdom through their own participation.

Traditionally, the proclamation of the Gospel has been a one-way traffic method and it needs to be two-way communication encouraging people to voluntarily accept the values of the gospel and the kingdom.

Section XVI

Nature and Mission

There is often a reference to the providence of God not only for humans but also for the birds other animals and nature. These points can be noted on the Sermon on the Mount about the lilies of the field arrayed in glory even greater than that of King Solomon and the parables sowing the seed, harvesting etc. point to the emphasis on God's providence for his whole creation. Later St. Paul speaks about the whole creation groaning and eagerly expecting for the appearance of the children of God, which is the transformation of the human beings, which will bring liberation and fulfilment for all the living beings and the whole creations. (Rom.8: 19-25) Thus in the entire New Testament the nature is also included in the salvation of human beings as humans become responsible nature will receive its freedom and fulfil the purpose for which God had created.

Section XVII

Church, Unity and Mission

The Gospel in New Testament is described as a reconciling power of God into the human relationship in relation to other human beings and the whole creation. When the gospel came to India, it was received by many of the outcastes groups because they recognised in it equality, liberation and dignity for all human beings. It came as a critique of the caste-ridden society that oppressed the dalit people from very ancient times. The preaching of the gospel broke the enmity between the different caste groups so that they all could become one in the fellowship of the church. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar himself a dalit who led a movement of the dalits for the liberation wanted to join the Christian church along with his group but refused to accept the gospel when he saw there were caste distinctions in the church itself. The Gospel should be uniting influence among the different ethnic, religious and caste groups in India.

There have been attempts to express this unifying power of the Gospel through different denominational groups joining together as united churches in South India in 1947 and North India in 1970. This unity was found in obedience to the teaching of the scripture (Eph. 4:) and the high priestly prayer of Jesus in the upper room (John. 17:)

The unity of the churches should also include the unity of the whole human kind living in harmony with other living beings and nature. The unity of the churches opens the possibility of growing in understanding one another and looking for positive points of agreement rather than differences between the religious cultural and ethnic groups. The unity itself should be the important emphasis of mission.

Section XVIII**Mission Spirituality for Combat**

All religions emphasise certain spirituality in their life of worship and obedience to their deity. The Christian church has also a spiritual emphasis in its whole life worship and service.

In India Mission should take into serious account two important issues that stand prominent within our context:

1. The poverty of the majority of our people
2. The multi-religious context of India.

Mission should address both these issues in its programmes. St. Paul writing to the Ephesians says that we are not fighting with flesh and blood but that our struggle is not against the enemies of blood and flesh but against the rules, the authorities, against the cosmic powers of the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12) Here St. Paul is addressing a structural evils in the society including economic, social, political and religious spheres. St. Paul wants Christians to be armed for spiritual warfare with spiritual weapons to engage in battle against all the oppressive forces in the society. M.M. Thomas calls this spirituality for combat.

Struggle against evil in the society is not with the weapons of destruction but with spiritual disapproval and rejection of evil powers that control the human life in the community. In the mission against evil forces in the society the Christian church and its members should engage in a spirituality that would combat with all the oppressive forces and still keep to the values of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Christ.

The development programmes of the church should include struggle against poverty, illiteracy, disease, communal discrimination, exploitation and oppression. This is a new type of spirituality to fight with the forces and evil that oppresses majority of our people. The positive elements in other religions should be co-opted in this struggle as part the mission of God.

Section XIX & XX**Suggestions for Action**

1. The participants be asked to identify the contextual issues that confront them in their own areas.
2. What kind of spirituality should the churches adopt in their struggle against the oppressive forces?
3. What is the place of prayer and liturgy as empowering the congregations to engage in social, economic and political action?
4. Should Christians participate in politics? Write a paper on the Mission programme that you would like to draw for your local congregation.

EVANGELISM

Evangelism - Good News of God - Mk 1:14

The coming of Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God bringing in the values of the rule of God in the world.

Section I

Proclamation and Communication:

The word 'proclaim' (*keerusso*) in its noun form (*keerux*) means 'herald' and also 'one who takes messages to and fro between enemies'. Thus the word 'proclaim' can also be translated as 'communicate', a word that has become popular with the revolution in the Information Technology. It is a Latin word meaning 'that which is common', 'togetherness', 'fellowship', 'give and take' and so on. It is not a one-way traffic and emphasizes mutuality. 'Communion' and 'community' are also from the same root. Communication has to do with mutual relations and equality among people, sharing the God given resources of the world with all.

Section II

What is Mission?

Missio means "sending people with the Good News of the Kingdom" – God sent His son Jesus Christ into this world, Jesus sent His disciples (John 20:21). His disciples and the early church sent missionaries throughout the world.

As they went out they also healed people and the new churches were established all over Asia Minor and Europe, engaged in mission action like feeding the widows (Acts 6:1-7). Every local congregation was engaged in some mission action.

- Participants' own understanding of the term and what kind of mission action is being pursued in their local churches.

Reference:

Premasagar, P. Victor., *New Horizons in Christian Mission in New Horizons in Christian Mission: A theological Exploration*. Pages xii-xxiii.

Section III

What is Context?

The Good News of God is communicated in relation to social, economic, cultural and political spheres in every local situation. These differ from place to place and from country to country. These have to be carefully studied when the evangelists communicate the message of God and Jesus Christ.

What do mean by context? The context is the situation in which we live, like, globalization, religious pluralism, poor and poverty, oppression and marginalisation, violence of Human Rights etc.

Section IV

An Analysis of the Present Day Context

Global Context – War and Peace, Nuclear and Arms Race, World Market Economy and Consumerist Ideology, Communication Technology and others.

Regional Context – The context of Religious Pluralism, Poor and Poverty, Religious Fundamentalism and Fanaticism, Oppressive Structures and systems, caste and Gender Issues, Patriarchy, Ecological Concerns and others.

References:

Nalunakkal, George Thomas., *Mission and Unity in the Context of Contemporary Challenges in Quest for Justice: Perspectives on Mission and Unity*, Pages 56 - 74

Section V

An Analysis of the Present Day Context – Participants' Views

Here the basic idea is to know how the participants perceive the context in which they live.

Section VI

Mission and the Church (Her Nature and Call)

Understanding of Church – In the New Testament (Pauline Epistles)

➤ Participants' Own understanding of the Church

The Nature and Call of the Church – Church as a sign of Kingdom of God

The church in the Mission of God – No mission on her own but only participates in the Mission of God (Mission Dei).

Churches' participation in the struggles for justice and peace – especially in relation to *Dalits* (the people oppressed and discriminated against economically, socially and culturally), the women, the Tribals (Indigenised peoples), and the other oppressed sections of the community

- Participants identify the role and function of the church from their own context and experience.

Reference:

The Church as Communion – LWF Documentation

Athyal, Leelamma., *Church: An Obstacle to God's Mission? In Mission Today. Pages 41-56*

Section VII

Local Congregation in Mission

The Parish/Local Congregation is “the church” in the biblical and social and even structural terms with a mandate to proclaim the Gospel in Word and Deed. This task is best done amongst the people in and around the Parish/Congregation. Their main resources are the members of congregation, their faith, commitment and their own time.

Here two documents are studied

1. A Missionary Congregation
2. VELCOM

Section VIII

Global Church Partnership

We do live in a Global Village and we confess that we believe in ‘the church universal’. In this church universal, we live in communion and partnership with each other.

- Identify participants' partner churches and their relationship

What does it mean by partnership? Is it One-Way traffic? Or two way traffic?

What we as the church can do by ourselves and where our partners can assist us in our work.

- Analyze the practice within the context of participants.

Section IX

Mission and the Unreached I

What do we mean by the term *unreached*?

Who are the so called “unreached”? Why are they unreached?

God is already present among the Nations of the world and there are no people without knowledge and experience of God. It is the preachers of the Gospels who had to go these people to share this Good News of God and Jesus Christ.

- Participants identify the people who have not yet heard the Good News and indicate methods of communicating the Gospel

Section X

Mission and the Unreached II

Identify the efforts of the individuals and societies engaged in this Ministry to the unreached peoples.

- The Church Growth Model
- Church Plantation Model
- Participants share their experiences in their respective churches.

Section XI

Mission and Religious Pluralism

What is Religion? - Religious beliefs and practices, Religious Values

Impact of religion on the people – Social bindings, moral and ethical values

Missionary Religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and others New Cults and Sects

What do we mean by Dialogue? and Why Dialogue?

Dialogue in words and actions and in silence (community living)

References:

Ravi Tiwari, *Dialogue in Praxis in Mission Today: Challenges and Concerns. Pages 81-88.*

Monica Melanchthon. *Mission in a Multi faith Context in Mission Today: Challenges and Concerns. Pages 106-132*

Section XII

Mission and Religious Fundamentalism

Extremes in Religious faith – Fundamentalism, fanaticism, Individualistic spirituality and others. Its impact on the people and society, especially the women and the other marginalized.

- Participants identify extreme forms of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism (in all religions within their own context)
- Identify the people that are affected by such attitudes

Mission in the context of Religious pluralism:

Our attitude towards other religions

Our identification and co-operative action with the people of other Faiths

What does it mean by wider ecumenism?

Section XIII

Mission and Communication I

The Good news of God was introduced by the coming of Jesus through proclamation and communication and a Kingdom of God. Through communication methods, the church works towards the transformation of this world in the very Kingdom of God.

Meaning of Communication – Communication and Theology

Methods of Communication:

Verbal – Evangelisation

Actions –

Non-verbal – Witness

The present state of Mass Media

Good Mass Media and Bad Mass Media and their Challenge to the Church

The positive and negative sides of Mass Media

Proclamation of the Gospel in India

In Socio-economic Context (rural and urban)

In the context of religious pluralism

Reference:

Meshack, Samuel Wilson.,

Section XIV

Mission and Communication II

- ❖ Discussion on the communication practices in the churches of the participants.
- ❖ What indigenous methods of communication would be helpful?
- ❖ What new methods could be introduced to enhance the perception of the Gospel priorities?

Section XV

Mission and Christian Education

Christian Education is a programme of Nurture for the younger generation to be equipped in the faith of their Fathers and Mothers. Christian Education should transfer faith rather than doubts. Every church has some graded syllabi for different age groups. These should be revised in relation to the new challenges in this Millennium. Christian Education is not only for the children and the youth but also for the adults in the Congregation.

Reference:

Rajaratnam, K., (Ed.), *The Ten Commandments & Today's Challenges*, ISPCK/Gurukul, 1998.

Section XVI

Mission and Healing Ministry I

Jesus sent out His disciples into the world to proclaim the Good News, heal the sick, and drive out the demons (to give fullness of life to those oppressed and tortured in the society).

Healing was an important part in the Ministry of Jesus but He healed people when they came to Him in order to meet their physical and spiritual needs. Medicine in the modern times has taken away the spiritual part of healing in its ministry. While attending to the physical illness, attention should also be given to the spiritual aspect. This is the holistic understanding of the healing ministry.

- Prepare a list of the healing miracles of Jesus and the apostles. Try to understand the basic frame work in which these miracles are presented.

The social, economic, political structures and even religious and cultural customs and practices have within them oppressive and exploitative elements which contribute to the ill health in the community and among the individuals. These need to be identified and eliminated from the societies to bring fullness of life to all people. There by healing is not only in terms of sickness diseases in the individuals but also in terms of oppression causing unhealthy relations in the society.

- Identify oppressive structures, practices and customs that urgently need healing for the well being of all.

Section XVII

Mission and Healing Ministry II

Discussion Continues

Section XVIII

Mission and Liturgy (Basic Elements and their Importance)

Liturgy and worship are not a passive exercises but an active engagement with the oppressive elements and structures in the society. It is a constructive exercise towards transformation of the whole world and ushering in the Kingdom of God, where justice and righteousness, equality and just sharing of the resources of the world become a reality.

- ❖ Importance of Liturgy in the Church
- ❖ Important Elements in Liturgy – Singing, readings, prayers, meditation.
- ❖ A Critical Evaluation of Liturgies of our Traditions

Reference:

Premasagar, Victor P., *Liturgy as Power for Action*, in *Congregations in Mission* Madras: CSI. Pages 30-32

Section XIX

Mission and Liturgy (Skills in Developing New Liturgies)

Developing appropriate liturgy to motivate and empower the congregation in Mission.

- ❖ Participants contribute important elements to be incorporated in the new liturgy and perhaps this liturgy could be used for closing worship service.

JUSTICE ISSUES

Righteousness and Justice are demands of Biblical faith, which can be traced throughout the Scriptures. The Covenant with Abraham is also related to Righteousness and Justice. In Genesis 18: 18-19, God says that He has chosen Abraham so that he may teach his descendants to do justice and righteousness in the world. The prophets also emphasised these two issues as the demands of God not only upon Israel as a chosen nation but also upon all the Nations of the world as creator god. The Bible emphasises peace as the condition of the total well being for the humans and all the creation. But peace with justice and integrity of creation are the demands of God.

Section I

Mission and Globalisation I

What do we mean by globalisation?

- ❖ Globalisation has become the vehicle of cultural invasion. It attempts to create monoculture undermining the economic, cultural and ecological diversities.
- ❖ The indigenous culture, and its potential for human development are vastly ignored.
- ❖ The tendency is to accept efficiency with productivity without any concern for compassion or justice
- ❖ Its way of functioning is to suppress any organised resistance by ordinary people to the unjust system

Impact of Globalisation on:

The Rich
The Middle Class
The Poor
The Poorest of the Poor
The Women
The Youth
The Children
The Nature

- Participants identify effects of globalisation in their own regions and local contexts.

Section II

Mission and Globalization II (Economy and Consumerism)

- ❖ What does it mean by Global Economy and Market Economy
- ❖ Reasons for emergence of New International Economic Order
- ❖ The role of International Monetary Fund & World Bank – Agents of oppression and marginalisation?
- ❖ It is basically profit motive economy than people oriented economy
- ❖ The effect of it could be seen clearly in the Third World Countries, mostly depending of the Rich West and the poor in the Third World. The main beneficiaries are the Rich West and the rich in the Third World Countries.

References:

- K. Rajaratnam, *Globalisation and its Implications for Mission, in New Horizons in Christian Mission. Pages 465 – 473*
- K. Rajaratnam, *Towards a Just Asia, in A Just Asia – LWF Studies*
- Lerritio Ariati, *The Influence of the globalized economy: A grassroots experience in A Just Asia – LWF Studies*

Section III

Mission and Women (Impact of Globalization)

The women are the worst affected section in the society because of Globalization.

- Identify the areas where the women are affected
- Culture vs. Globalization

Section IV

Issues of Poverty

Jesus identified himself with the poorest of the poor from his very birth, in the manger. His Ministry began with his famous Nazareth Manifesto, for the poor and the oppressed. His ministry was exactly as he promised in the manifesto. When John sent his disciples to clarify for himself, if Jesus the messiah, the evidence Jesus gave was his ministry to the poor and the oppressed and finally Jesus was almost poetic when he spoke of the judgement - the criteria for separating the sheep and the goats, to augment the ministry to the poor and the oppressed. With such undivided focus on the ministry to the poor and the oppressed, the Church in Asia, has no option especially when we are faced with the situation of inhuman oppression of millions of people denied humanity, equality, justice and now with the boldness of inhuman cruelty perpetrated on the practitioners of the gospel of Christ, churches identity with the poor must be restored to the centre of its agenda.

The realities of today:

- ❖ The tribals/indigenous peoples are deprived of their livelihood and of their very identity linked to it.
 - ❖ The marginalized communities (Dalit in India) continue to be impoverished, discriminated against and pushed into bondage, to the urban slums, into child labour and into prostitution
 - ❖ Poverty totally dehumanises, undermines the human dignity and suppresses the growth and development of people.
- Participants identify the effects of globalisation on the economy
 - How does it affect the church and relationships in the congregations
- ❖ Church in Solidarity with the Poor - Discuss

References:

- K. Rajaratnam, *Churches' Solidarity with the Poor. Keynote address at National Convention on Poverty, 16-18 March, 1999. New Delhi.*
- Consultation Statement, *Consultation on Solidarity with the Poor, DSA/UELCI, 24-26 November, 1999. Chennai*
- K. Rajaratnam, *Church and Poverty (A Book Let)*
- K. Rajaratnam, *God Blessed them in The LWF Ninth Assembly Report (Hong Kong, 1997)*

Section V

Mission and Human Rights I

Creation theology is the basis for not only Human Rights but also the rights of the whole created order. The United Nations has set up Human Rights Council, which has drawn up conventions on Human Rights and encouraged the nations of the world to accept their responsibility in protecting the human rights of their people. They have set up committees to monitor and receive reports from countries about implementation of the Human Rights programmes in their countries.

Human Rights are related to torture, denial of basic necessities of life, freedom, right for work, protection, health, education and food. These and other basic rights of the people have to be protected by the political rulers of the countries, especially in terms of protecting from oppression and providing structures and making arrangements for security of all sections of the people. Poverty in relation to unjust economic and social orders is also an urgent issue in most of the Third World countries. The Creation Theology emphasises that God has provided in the creation itself adequate resources for food, healing and wisdom. But these are controlled in terms of trade and Economic Orders where majority of people are denied access to basic education, health and security of food.

Jesus said that I have come that people may have life and life in all its abundance. The Gospel is about transforming the unjust structures that keep majority of the peoples of the world in poverty and perpetual want for their basic needs.

Section VI

Mission and Human Rights II

Human Rights should be pursued as mission priorities. Recently Dr. Amrtya Sen has pointed out that development is not just a matter of economics but also basically dependent on Human Rights. He suggests social space, economic space, political space and participation and security as the basic Human Rights that contribute to the development and well being of the people. Where these are lacking in a community any amount of economic input will not contribute to development.

- Identify the areas that prevent people from holistic development.
- How can the church through its own resources, style of life and functioning contribute to the elimination of poverty?

Section VII

Mission and Human Development I

Development can be defined as “a process of human liberation in which justice, people’s participation, self reliance, holistic health care, quality of life and meeting of basic human needs are realised through social transformation”.

Basically, the biblical foundation for the church’s responsibility to do justice, practice love and mercy and to walk humbly with God should be stressed. At the same time, there should be awareness of the socio-economic factors that make up the context of our participation in God’s Mission.

Development can be identified under different heading like:

- Development as progress in Social goals.
- Development as Change in economic and social structures
- Development as liberation
- Development as Church’s main agenda

Approaches to Human Development

Pancha Sheela (AEPF)

- Action
- Education
- Power
- Organisation
- Awakening

Gandhian Model

Conscientization – Paule Freire

Participatory Model

Section VIII

Mission and Human Development II (Participants' Reflection)

- Participants identify the developmental models used in their churches
- What new models are suitable to one's own context

Section IX

Mission and the Marginalized

Marginalisation is a social phenomenon of pushing certain groups of people from the centre to the margin in terms of ethnicity, caste, culture and religion. In the times of Jesus it was the poor, who could not keep the Law because of economic oppression, the Samaritans in terms of the purity of race, which the Jews claimed for themselves and did not have any dealings with the Samaritans, drinking water, eating together, and equality of privileges, all these were denied to them. Similarly, there were the Publicans, Tax collectors discriminated because of their profession under the Roman Government. Later the Jew and the Gentile issue at the time of the Apostles is also a similar marginalisation of the Nations in preference for Jews as Elect with a Covenant, Law and the Promises, whereas the others were discriminated as not belonging to these privileges.

Such marginalisation can be seen today in the world in which the people are pushed into a condition of poverty away from the resources, power, and skills that are concentrated in the hands of a few with political and economic power and skills for progress. In India, context caste system is a social and cultural discrimination against the original ethnic people of India, the Dalits and the Tribal, spread all over the country. The upper castes treat them as out caste and untouchables consigning them to menial jobs in the community for the benefit of the upper castes. They are also denied access to political and economic power which totally disables them from any hopes of progress, development and access to the resources, education, health and political power enjoyed by those at the centre. Similar contexts can be identified in other regions also.

Jesus was concerned about the people that are oppressed, marginalized and harassed by those in power with access to resource of the nation. He had fellowship with the poor, the publicans and had compassion for the people without food. The church from its very inception expressed concern for such marginalized and oppressed peoples.

Similarly, the church today should have the concerns of the marginalized people as the mission priorities.

Section X

Mission and Gender Sensitivity

Women have been marginalized in all societies except in a few ancient tribal communities where patriarchy is practiced. This discrimination against women has become part of the cultures, religions and even the grammar of the languages. Although there are several instances where women are given importance in the Biblical narratives by enlarge there is a prejudice against women and their place in the community. Women are subordinated to the male members of the family, community and society as a whole. These cultural customs and practices have helped a patriarchal interpretation of the Scriptures. Even in the translation, the word man/men are used in places, where women are also included. The feminist movements have brought to the forefront open discrimination and oppression of women based on the gender.

Jesus affirmed the place of women in his ministry. There were several women who followed him and supported his work. Women were the first to receive the commission to tell the God News of resurrection to the disciples. They were present in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciple and other praying together. They were active in the ministry as we read through the Acts of the Apostles. The Genesis creation stories have been misinterpreted subordinating women to men. But a careful reading would emphasize their equality with men in creation. Women scholars have reinterpreted these stories emphasizing the equality and the importance of women in the Biblical narratives.

In the Christian Church, the women are not given equal place with that of men in the structures of the church. They are hardly represented, and even when represented they were given only a token representation. Women are not ordained in many churches on the basis of purity and pollution theories, which are more in terms of cultural practices rather than biblical imperatives. The church should give women their rightful place at all levels of the life of the church and also in the ordained ministry including the episcopacy.

The liturgies and the language used in the church should be inclusive of women. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible in English makes a conscious attempt to take away the exclusive male terminology and uses an inclusive language through out the Bible.

Section XI

Mission and Ecological Concerns I

The ecological crisis is created by modern industrial and technological growth and modern life style. A paradigm of development, the Western industrial growth model, is almost universally accepted. It is a process whereby we use enormous capital and exploit natural resources, particularly the non-renewal ones. Ruthless exploitation of nature and fellow beings is the inevitable consequence of this pattern of development. Decisions about the kind of goods to be produced and the type of technology to be

used are influenced by the demand of consumerist economy where controlling logic of growth is greed and not need. It creates imbalances between different sectors and allows massive exploitation of the rural and natural resources for the benefit of the dominant classes. Much of the profit-oriented growth, which destroys the eco balance, is engineered and controlled by the multinationals.

Ecological Crisis is a Justice Issue:

- ❖ The connection between economic exploitation and environmental degradation is clear in the deforestation issue. The massive destruction of forests through avarice and greed result in atmospheric changes. The poor are driven out of their habitat for the sake of “development”
- ❖ Justice is actualised in just relationships. Unequal partnership and patterns of domination are unjust. Unjust treatment of the planet by humans is one of the principal causes of the ecological crisis.
- ❖ Uneven distribution, control and use of natural resources are serious justice issues.
- ❖ Fast depletion of the natural (non-renewable) resources today raises the question of our responsibility to future generations.

God’s Created Order, its purpose and Nature – Review of Genesis Creation Story

The present state of Nature: Reasons –

Pollution
Human ignorance, need and greed
Irresponsible Stewardship

Effects on Nature and people

Section XII

Mission and Ecological Concerns II

The relation between the Humans and the Nature

Humans above Nature
Humans in Nature

Two models available:

- ❖ Renunciation Model: Since greed is identified as the source of ecological crisis, renunciation is the key. Simple life style and do not exploit the Nature
- ❖ Liberative solidarity model: The church in solidarity with the weakest, with that part of the whole creation. It aims at standing for the weakest at all times, even in times of exploitation and oppression.

➤ Participants identify areas where they have to be in solidarity with the Nature.

Reference:

Chetti, Daniel D., (Ed), *Ecology and Development: Theological Perspectives*. Madras: UELCI/GURUKUL & BTESSC, 1991

Section XIII

Communication in Relation to Justice Issues I

Communication, in the audio and visual media, is changing our way of understanding reality and of understanding ourselves. For centuries, communication was primarily verbal, whether oral or written. It was limited and could reach only selected few. But now because of mass media and technological explosion, it has become easy to reach people almost to any remotest corner of the globe. Today nowhere people are untouched by the impact of media upon religious and moral attitudes, political and social systems, and education. The media is shaping our ideas, values and attitudes.

In the present day of media, whether Cinema, Television, Internet, or printed media, we do notice a different kind of culture – a culture of violence, immoral behaviour, hatred and destruction.

- How can we meaningfully translate the message of peace, justice and integrity of creation through media. Is it possible and viable?
- Can modern communication create solidarity among the minorities, where we draw strength from each other?

Section XIV

Communication in Relation to Justice Issues II

- Identify some of the justice issues which needs concentration in terms of communication

Section XV

Encounter of Science and Faith

Section XVI

Mission and Post Modernity I

With rise of the Enlightenment in the 17th & 18th centuries, the world has entered in to modern era with reason, scientific knowledge and objectivity as the test of reality and all the others as private beliefs, which cannot stand the test of reason. Science was considered to be anti religion. Theologians have first rejected this scientific view resulting in evolution and other scientific interpretations of the bible but later began to interpret the theological ideas in a scientific manner with rational interpretation of the Scriptures. Scientist had no room for religion as it was based on faith and not reason and scientific proofs.

However, in the recent years science itself is seen to be only a hypothesis based on imagination similar to that of religion, based on faith. The scientific discoveries are only interpretations of world, nature and human existence. These discoveries might be overtaken by the new discoveries as it happened in the scientific world. There is a consensus among the theologians and the scientists that both are explorations into the same reality and need reinterpretation in every new generation to take into account new developments and discoveries in the human development and history.

The religious and scientific leaders are beginning to realise that we have already moved over from the so called modern period to that of post modern era which has shattered the earlier confidence in their understanding of reality and nature of the world and human existence. The explosions of scientific discoveries and technical skills in communication, revolution in social and economic fields and political theory have all been transformed to meet the new needs of the postmodern era. There is a move from the written to the oral and audio visual, from generalisation to particularity, from the universal precepts to particular and local concerns, from the eternal truth to particular and contextual issues raising new question about earlier paradigms in interpreting the reality.

These postmodern realities should be taken into account in the way in which the mission of God is interpreted and practised today. The post modernity calls for flexibility and a sense of relativism inn our understanding of reality and also demands

a perception in which plurality and diversity of interpretations are seen as valid and as a necessity if we have to grapple with the contextual issues in the social, economic, political, religious and cultural areas of human existence today. Our understanding of mission it self has to be related to local, particular contextual issues that confront us today. There by the oppressive and exploitative structures of the society have to be addressed and challenged as part of mission in postmodern era.

Section XVII

Mission and Post Modernity II

Discussion Continues

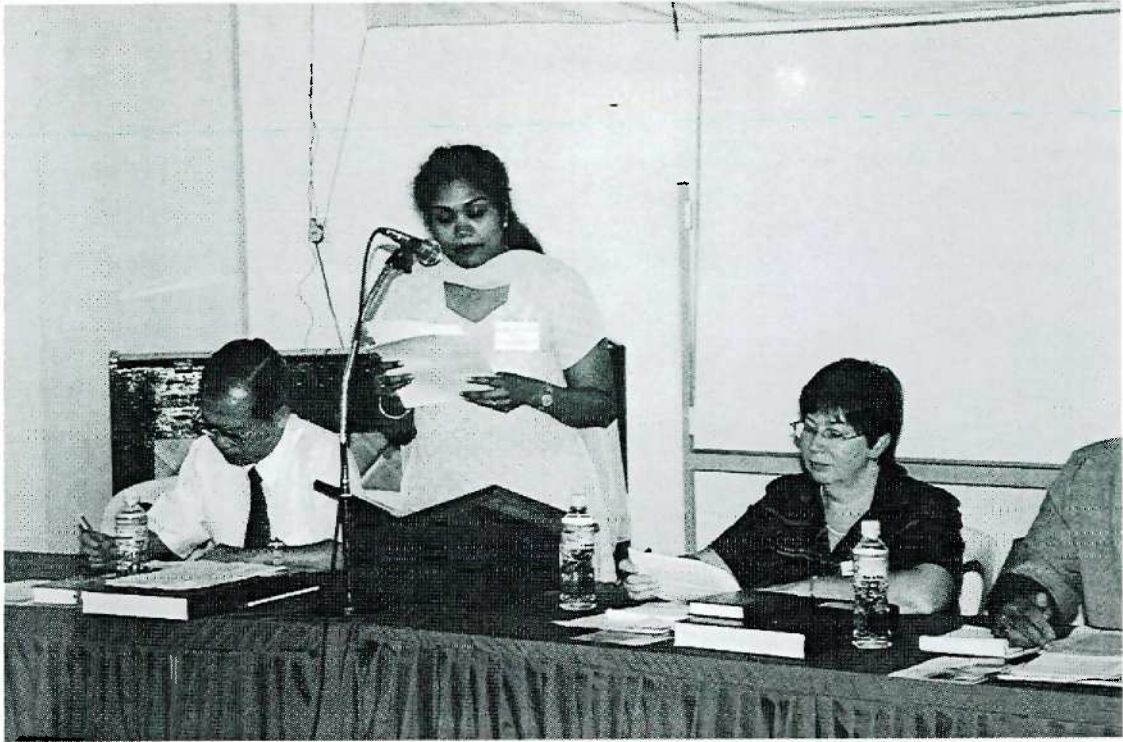
Section XVIII

Any Other Issues relevant to the Participants' Context

Section XIX

Any Other Issues Relevant to the Participants' Context

Aide Memoire Program List of Participants



Dr. Monica Melanchthon, India, speaking to the participants
To her left: Dr. Thomas Yu, Taiwan
To her right: Ms. Agneta Ucko, LWF Deputy General Secretary



One of the discussion groups

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

ASIA SEMINAR ON MISSION Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, 25-30 October 2000

AIDE-MEMOIRE

I. PREAMBLE

A series of consultations and seminars on mission have been held in Asia since 1978. The All Asia Lutheran Seminar on Mission, held in Hong Kong in 1978, tried to encourage member churches in Asia to study the regional thinking on mission, the missiological challenges and response of individual countries to some of the challenges. The Consultation on Global Partnership in Mission, which took place in Manila, Philippines, in 1979, continued to encourage the Lutheran churches in Asia to increase the awareness of the mission responsibility in the region and to have a look at the patterns of practical cooperation for mission between Asian churches and overseas partners. The Asia Mission Consultation, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1991, put emphasis on rethinking an Asian Christian form that is true to the Asian culture, including the structure of theology, worship life and the relationship with society in order to become effective in the churches' ministry and mission.

In line with the LWF Ninth Assembly's resolution and commitment with reference to a Mission and Evangelism emphasis, the Asia Regional Coordinating Committee (ARCC), at its meeting in Bangkok, September 1998, made a proposal to develop a program for mission in Asia. It was decided that a seminar on Mission in the Asian Context be planned and held in October/November, 2000. This plan exactly corresponds with the LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission, held in Nairobi in October 1998, responding to the above LWF Ninth Assembly's resolution. The consultation recommended that more missiological studies be conducted by member churches, taking into account the understanding of mission as including proclamation, service and advocacy for justice. The Program Committee for Mission and Development approved this Seminar for the year 2000 at the Council's meeting in Bratislava, Slovak Republic in June 1999.

The Asian Church Leadership Conference in Chennai, India, November/December, 1999, had as theme : 'Mission in Asia for the 21st Century'. Some of its recommendations on mission stated, 'Member churches coordinate and network their mission activities and programs within the Asian region' and 'Theological seminaries provide courses for the study of mission...'

There is need for a paradigm shift in the theology of mission, a shift towards seeing transformation as mission imperative and dialogue in mutual respect with people of diverse faiths, as well as trying to have a deeper understanding of the meaning of God's mission in the world. This paradigm shift in mission theology also implies the need for new approaches to both mission training and practices. This seminar will try to develop and help prepare curriculum for the Mission Training Program in Asia and to develop a clear plan of action for mission.

II. TIME AND PLACE

The Seminar will take place at Sabah Theological Seminary, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, from 25-30 October, 2000 (arrival on Wednesday morning/afternoon 25 October with the opening worship at 18.00 hours, departure on Tuesday 31 October). The Seminar will conclude on October 30.

III. AIMS AND GOALS

This Seminar relates to the LWF Aim 'support member churches in their efforts to proclaim the Gospel, create, develop and maintain holistic ministries'. It also links with the LWF Goal 'assist member churches in strengthening ministries, and the resources required to support such ministries, which integrate proclamation, advocacy and service in a holistic way'.

IV. OBJECTIVES

1. To deepen the missional understanding and practices presented in the Findings and Recommendations of the LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission, held in Nairobi, October 1998
2. To promote a participatory engagement in the process of rethinking and reformulating the mission task of the church
3. To discuss some of the socio-political and religio-cultural challenges to the churches in Asia
4. To formulate an action plan for mission in Asia towards the 21st century
5. To discuss program plans for the Missionary Training Program in Asia.

V. PROGRAM AND WORKING METHODS

The overall working methods during the Seminar will involve a combination of Bible Study, theme and sub-theme presentations, discussions (in plenary and in small groups), and local visitation. The theme selected for the Seminar is '**Mission in the Asian Context for the Third Millennium**'. Three sub-themes are further identified :

1. Mission and Communion
2. Missio Dei in the Asian Context
3. Mission and Church Renewal

There will be seven groups which will meet several times throughout the Seminar to focus on developing a program plan and curriculum for the Missionary Training Program. Each group will focus on and discuss a selected topic. The seven topics identified are :

1. Mission and Scriptures
2. Mission and the Church
3. Mission and Context
4. Mission, Culture and Communication
5. Mission Responses to Globalization
6. Mission, Healing Ministry & Service
7. Mission and People of Diverse Faiths

Two topics, namely « Mission, Culture and Communication » and « Mission Responses to Globalization » will be more specific, while the other five topics will be more general. In each group a short paper on the respective topic will be presented as discussion starter.

In all group discussions, issues such as: gender, youth, disabled, cooperation, communion, advocacy will be kept in mind. The ACTEAS and ARCC members will be active in all groups as resource persons.

VI. WORSHIP

Each day will open with worship and Bible study, conducted by participants. The opening worship service will be conducted by the host church. The evening devotions will be conducted by participants. Participants will attend Sunday worship in various Lutheran congregations in Sabah, Kota Kinabalu. The closing service will be organized by the participants.

VII. DOCUMENTATION

Participants will be provided with

1. Resolutions and statements adopted by the Ninth Assembly of the LWF and by the LWF Council
2. Findings of the LWF Mission Consultation in Nairobi, 1998
3. Comments and Suggestions by the LWF Global Consultation on Theological Education, Rome 1999
4. Regional Strategic Plans-from LWF Urban Ministry Strategic Planning Workshop, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 1999
5. Statement from the Asia Church Leadership Conference, Chennai, India, November/December 1999
6. Keynote address and presentations
7. Information material provided by staff
8. Information material provided by the host church

VIII. LANGUAGE

The Seminar will be conducted in English

IX. SPONSORSHIP AND EXPENSES

The Seminar is held under the auspices of the LWF/DMD Asia Desk and hosted by the Sabah Theological Seminary and the Basel Christian Church in Malaysia (BCCM). The LWF will cover the travel costs, board and lodging for all participants and the resource persons.

X. PARTICIPANTS

26 persons from selected member churches
11 persons from ARCC members
12 persons from ACTEAS members
7 persons from Seminaries in Asia
5 persons from Mission partners
4 Resource Persons
3 Youth representatives
4 Staff
2 persons from local ecumenical organizations

Total : 64 persons

LWF Asia Seminar on Mission

October 25-30, 2000, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

PROGRAM

Wednesday, October 25

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| 18.00-19.00 | - | Opening Worship (Bishop Thein Fui Voo, BCCM)
Welcome (Dr. Thu En Yu)
Greetings (Ms. Agneta Ucko, LWF Deputy General Secretary) |
| 19.00-21.30 | - | Dinner – Building up Communion – Self-Introduction |

Thursday, October 26

- | | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| 08.30-09.15 | - | Devotion/Bible study (Rev. A. Jeyakumar, India) |
| 09.15-10.30 | - | Roll Call (Ms. Karin Kaukorat)
Welcome (Rev. Ginda Harahap)
General orientation to seminar (Dr. Péri Rasolondraibe, LWF/DMD Director) |
| 10.30-11.00 | - | <i>Coffee Break</i> |
| 11.00-12.30 | - | Keynote Address: “Mission in the Asian Context for the Third Millennium” (Dr. Monica Melanchthon, India)
Discussion |
| 12.30-14.00 | - | <i>Lunch</i> |
| 14.00-15.30 | - | Mission and Communion (Dr. Péri Rasolondraibe) |
| 15.30-16.00 | - | <i>Coffee Break</i> |
| 16.00-17.30 | - | Exploring Curriculum Formation (Dr. K. Rajaratnam, India) |
| 17.30-18.00 | - | Devotion (Ms. Wannee Kemtong, Thailand) |
| 18.30-20.00 | - | <i>Dinner</i> |

Friday, October 27

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| 08.30-09.15 | - | Devotion/Bible study (Rev. Ms. Adelina Simanjuntak, Indonesia – requested) |
| 09.15-10.30 | - | Missio Dei in the Asian Context (Dr. Robinson Radjagukguk (Indonesia) |
| 10.30-11.00 | - | <i>Coffee Break</i> |
| 11.00-12.30 | - | Mission and Church Renewal (Dr. Won Yong Ji, USA) |
| 12.30-14.00 | - | <i>Lunch</i> |
| 14.00-15.30 | - | Group discussion |
| 15.30-16.00 | - | <i>Coffee Break</i> |
| 16.00-17.30 | - | Group discussion |
| 17.30-18.00 | - | Devotion (Rev. Shigenori Miyazawa, Japan) |
| 18.30-20.00 | - | <i>Dinner</i> |

Saturday, October 28

08.30-09.15	-	Devotion/Bible study (Dr. Jamilin Sirait, Indonesia)
09.15-10.30	-	Groups
10.30-11.00	-	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.00-12.30	-	Groups
12.30-14.00	-	<i>Lunch</i>
14.00-15.30	-	Groups
15.30-16.00	-	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16.00-17.30	-	Groups
17.30-18.00	-	Devotion (Prof. Ms. Grace Victoria, India)
18.30-20.00	-	<i>Dinner</i>

Sunday, October 29

08.30-12.30	-	Worship at BCCM and PCS churches
12.30-14.00	-	<i>Lunch</i>
14.30-18.00	-	Sight Seeing Tour
18.30	-	<i>Dinner at BCCM Parish Hall with cultural show</i>

Monday, October 30

08.30-09.15	-	Devotion/Bible study (Rev. Ms. Jollify Daniel, Malaysia)
09.15-10.30	-	Reporting from groups/discussion
10.30-11.00	-	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.00-12.30	-	Reporting from groups/discussion
12.30-14.00	-	<i>Lunch</i>
14.00-15.30	-	Discussion on Curriculum
15.30-16.00	-	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16.00-17.30	-	Discussion on Curriculum
17.30-19.00	-	Closing Worship/Holy Communion (Dr. Thu En Yu, STS)
19.00	-	<i>Dinner</i>
		Sayonara

Tuesday, October 31 DEPARTURE

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